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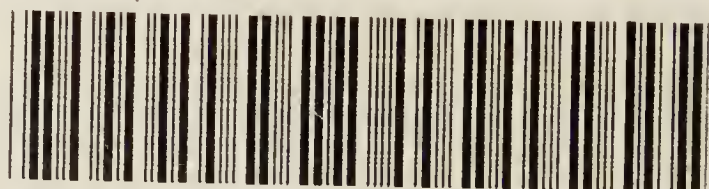
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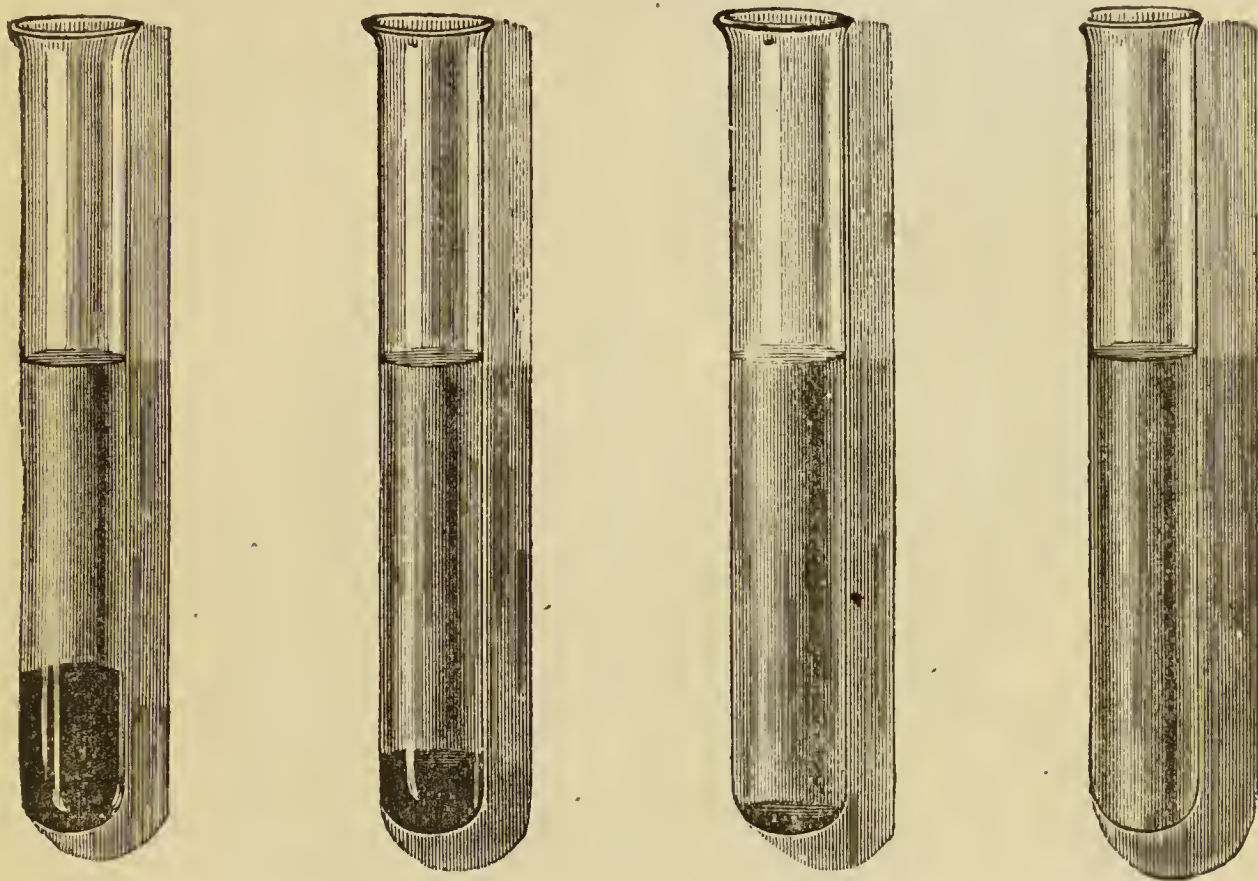
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INTRODUCTION.

THE subject of Nurses and Nursing has, perhaps, never before been discussed so much as at the present time, and so great has been the interest and sympathy shown towards us by their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales that this year is marked as being the first occasion on which the representatives of any philanthropic institution have been invited to Marlborough House, and I believe the first time when the Heir Apparent and his Consort have specially identified themselves with the great army of workers who devote their lives to the care of the sick.

Many and rapid strides have been made in the nursing world. Much has been both said and written in

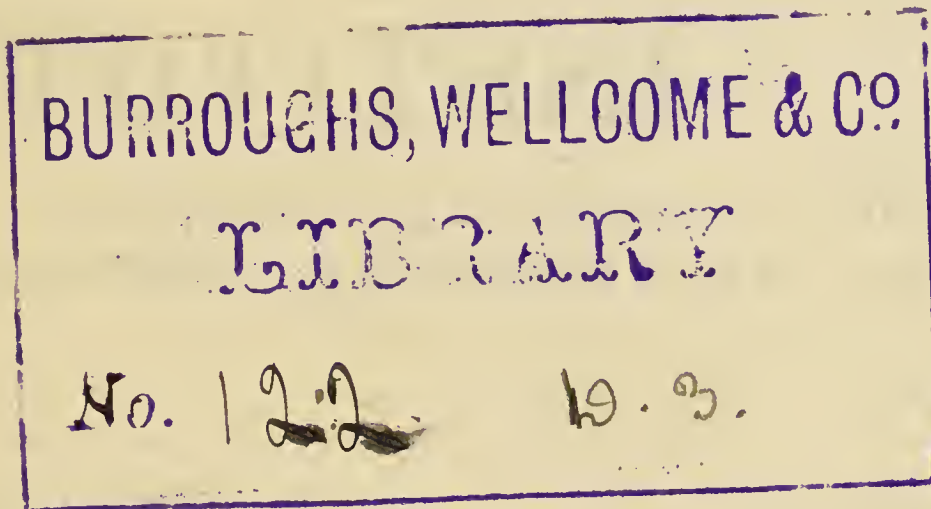
reference to nurses, yet it is curious to notice how little is really known of us personally. This little volume is sent out with the hope that it will afford a means of gaining an insight not only into the work of a nurse, but into the character of the nurses themselves. As I anticipated this, my first attempt, I felt overwhelmed with a sense of my incapability; then, too, I reflected that in the books of the present day much fiction of a startling nature is introduced. Mine is to be but a record of simple facts without the customary embellishments. Will it interest? The knowledge that there are still many to whom facts are welcome, causes me to hope that it may. The real names of the characters introduced I have supplemented by others, the details in connexion with them remain unaltered.

During my career both as Hospital and Private Nurse, I have been struck with the fact that the public know so little of us. The idea in publishing this little volume has not been to air our grievances, but simply to give its readers an insight in the Life of a Nurse, her time, and how it is spent.

Several chapters I have devoted to the interests of Probationers; the hints attempted to be conveyed is the result of much observation of the difficulties to be met

with in the life of the new comer, with whom I most sincerely sympathize. Should this feeble attempt succeed in arousing the interest of my readers, my best hopes will be realized.

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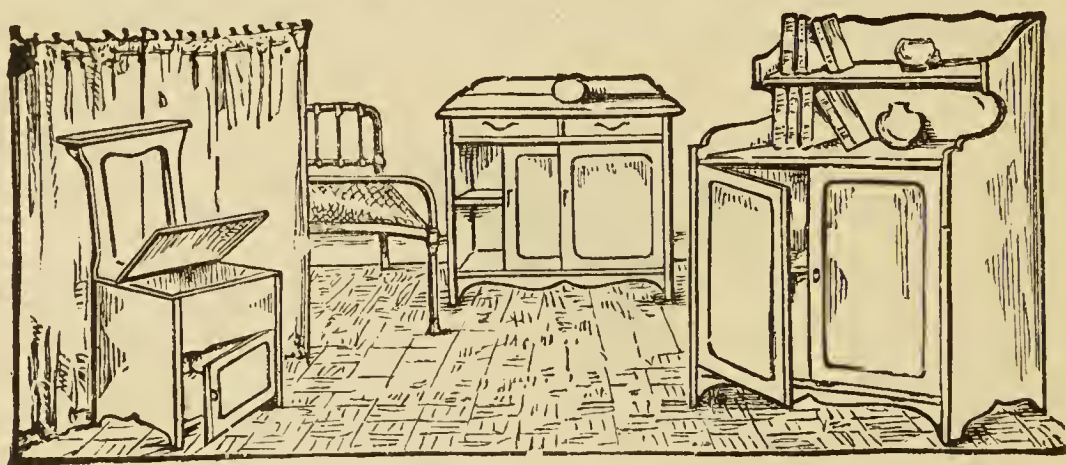
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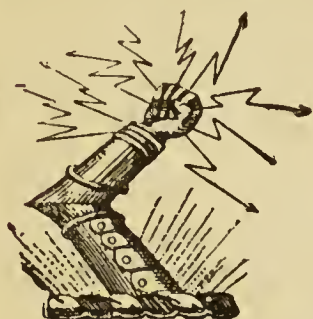
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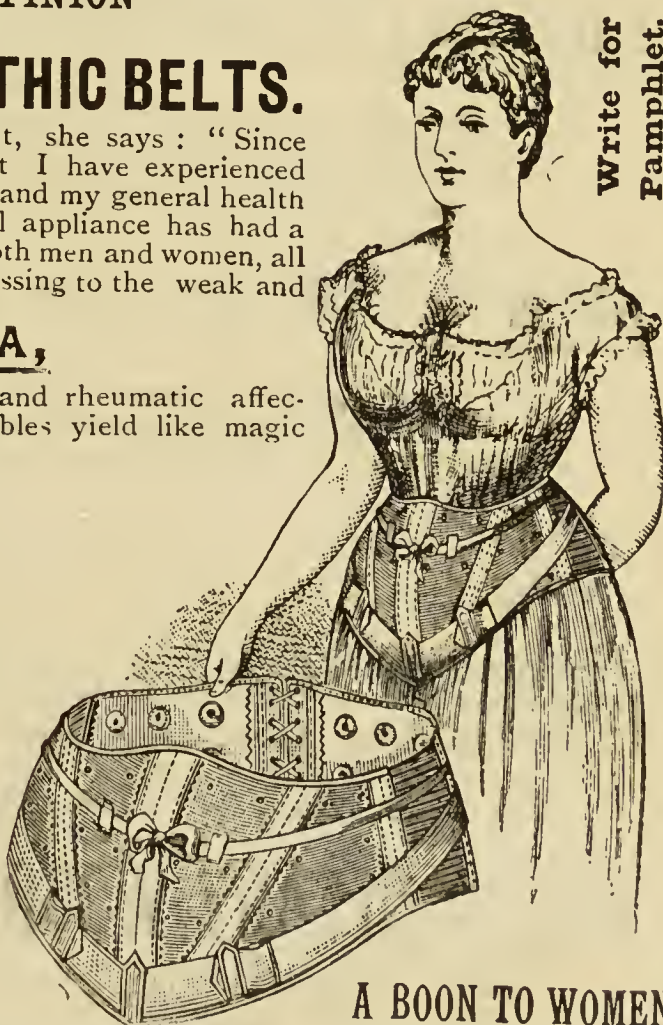
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No. 122 d. 3. CHAPTER I.

MY ARRIVAL.



TO say that every one, whose *forte* is Nursing, can find life in a Sisterhood congenial to her, is a great mistake. This I found to be the result of my own experience. Yet I gained much knowledge, and some of the rough corners that tended to mar my life as a woman and nurse were probably smoothed and softened by my intercourse with others, more truly unselfish and less worldly than myself.

It was one evening, in the middle of January, that I, a girl of eighteen, found myself on my way to London to join the Hospital and Sisterhood in which I afterwards spent several years of my life. The evening was wet, and the dreariness of the surroundings found an answering echo in my heart, as I looked from the carriage window into the darkness without.

I had always been fond of nursing from a child, but my former work had consisted in the nursing of such slight ailments as the colds and headaches of my friends. This was to be Hospital work. In what did it consist?

A new path lay open before me, and my heart sank before it. The train had by this time arrived at the station, and soon I was on my way to the Hospital, where I should see for myself.

In answer to my knock, I was shown into the reception room to wait for the superintendent. Sister Faith we will call her in these pages. Her dress was exactly the same as that worn by the other Sisters; she gave herself no airs, nor did she in any way assert her authority. Save, indeed, that gentle authority peculiar to herself, which none could resist. Many matrons have I seen since then, all of whom have had a distinctive mark. Sister Faith needed none. She was a tall woman with, I may say, a courtly bearing, a kind, genial face, a heart and hands ever ready to care for the helpless, even when this was attended by much self-denial on her own part. What if she sometimes seemed hard on her fellow workers, she was at least kind to the patients. In exacting from us obedience to what she considered to be the will of God, she sought to obey Him implicitly herself. Whilst insisting upon the practice of self-denial in her workers she practised it herself, denying herself the things most dear to her. She was a true woman, and well worthy of the esteem and love so universally accorded to her.

“I am very pleased to welcome you, my child, and trust that you will be very happy amongst us,” were her words of greeting, as she seated herself in a chair quite opposite to me. I felt myself regarded by a pair of powerful eyes, and returning her gaze, I knew instinctively that she was at least worthy of trust. She asked me many questions in reference to my journey, my school life and where I spent it. Then she added,

kindly, "You are looking tired, let me show you to your room; you will like to take off your things. Afterwards you must partake of some refreshment."

Arrived at the top of a steep flight of stairs, I found myself in a long room (the probationers' bedroom I afterwards learnt). By the side of each bed was a narrow strip of carpet, also a tiny washstand. Over the washstand was a half circle resembling half an iron hoop, and suspended from it, on either side, were chintz curtains, which, when pulled together and tied, formed a small tent, thus securing perfect privacy at will. The bed linen looked exceedingly white, everything being faultlessly neat and arranged in the most perfect order. I felt at once that I must do my part to keep it so; indeed, Sister Faith gave me at once to understand that "that was what she expected." "There are two drawers for you," she added, "which should be ample room for your belongings. We are in this world for so short a time that we surely can dispense with those superfluities that others think so essential. Any needless things you may have can go back into your boxes until you can find some worthy person upon whom to bestow them. Now come down and have some tea. I will afterwards look over your things with you." On my arrival in the dining room I found a Sister there, to whom I was introduced. Sister Faith explained to me that "although long past the usual tea hour Sister Clare would take tea with me," she having just returned from an operation in a private house at which she had been assisting. "I am glad to say," she continued, "that so far it has proved very satisfactory."

An operation! Yes, surely! This was quite a new

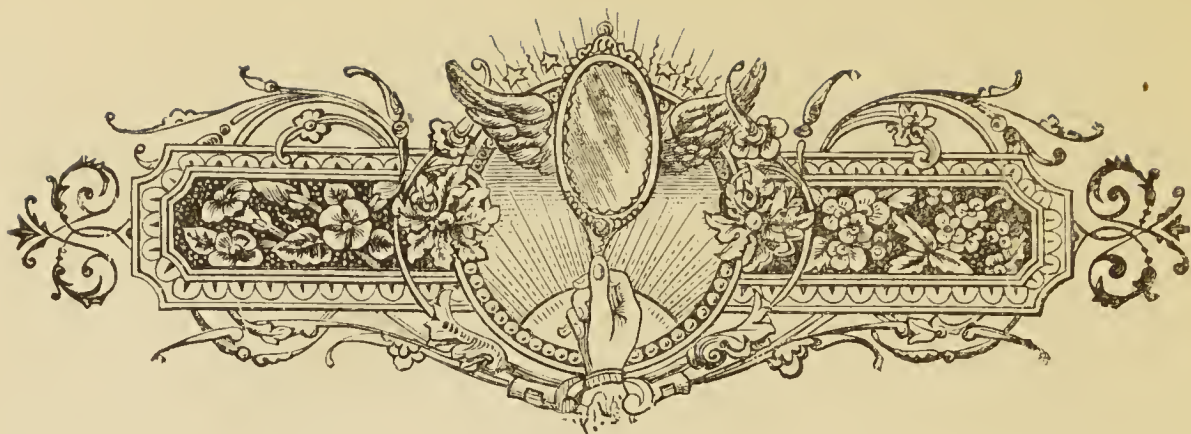
departure, and one to which, I feared, that I should never become accustomed. Sister Faith was quick to notice my terrified expression. "Don't be frightened, little one," she said, "you, too, will get accustomed to these things." (She frequently called me little one, from the fact that I was not only small in person, but the youngest Sister there.)

The tea was despatched speedily, as were all our meals, it being considered "sinful to waste precious time at the table." The food provided was always cooked well, but consisted of the plainest viands. At the option of the Sisters they could abstain from flesh meat to give to the poor, but that not more than three times a week; sugar also could be dispensed with altogether, and the sugar ticket given for the same purpose. "There is nothing," Sister Faith used to say, "so beneficial to the soul as the mortifying of the body in this direction." Much of my wearing apparel was returned to my boxes. My dresses were sent away to have all trimmings removed, for I was to wear them until the fact of my suitability to become a Sister had been tested.

By the time I had been in all the wards it was supper time, then came prayers. My greatest trial was to come. It was the custom of Sister Faith, on the withdrawal of the servants, to pay a visit all round, ask any questions that she wished to know, and bid us each good night. My turn came: "My child," she said, "I must ask you to take off that little gold brooch; it is very neat, doubtless, but not at all suitable to one who hopes to become a Sister. A watch is necessary, but it must be carried on a piece of black cord, the same as that worn by the other Sisters. You will go to bed quietly; talking

is forbidden in your room, where it is expected that the last minutes of the day will be spent in devotion. I have asked Sister Miriam to report any disobedience to me. You will be called at half-past five, when you are expected to rise immediately, dress quickly, leave your room neat, and spend the time remaining in devotion. We take breakfast at seven." Thus ended a day which proved to be one of the most important of my life.





CHAPTER II.

DIFFICULTIES.

MY mattress proved to be a very hard one, so hard, that I could not sleep, and on inspecting it I found that it was made of straw. I mentioned this fact to one of the Sisters later in the day. She replied, "New probationers seldom sleep on the first night. We are taught to endure hardness as 'good soldiers.' The patients have all spring mattresses, the servants also; but," she added, "you must become accustomed to privations. We all found it hard at first." At half-past five a light streamed in the room, and on looking up I saw a Sister, with the sweetest of faces, lighting the gas. She came to us each individually, telling us the time, but stopped when she reached my bed, remarking, "Ah! you are already awake. It is half-past five, and time to get up." I rose at once, remembering Sister Faith's injunction of the previous night "to get up immediately I was called." Soon a stir was made all round the room, and I heard the voice of Sister Miriam (the

probation mother) bidding the last sleeper to rise. The curtains were pulled round, and the important business of dressing was proceeding in real earnest. We each were allowed a looking-glass, not to foster pride, but that we might see that our caps were straight. Yet what a small glass! It obstinately refused to reflect more than the cap and the top part of the face. I may here mention that we were expected to part our hair, brushing it quite back. A fringe was only seen on the first day of the arrival of the unfortunate new comer who happened to possess one. She was at once told that it *must* be strained back, until its growth caused it to keep back naturally; for "no such unseemly worldly things as fringes could be permitted." My curiosity was much excited one evening on the appearance of a new probationer, whose hair was unusually curly—nor were these curls well behaved, for they evidently failed to realise that they had at length arrived at a Sisterhood where they should be quite lost to sight. If to memory dear, I say that they failed to realise this by opposing themselves to the powers that be, and hanging in rich profusion over her face. I watched for her re-appearance rather anxiously at the table the next morning. She sat quite opposite to me, so I had the opportunity of looking for her curls. Yes, they were gone. But how? That will always remain a mystery, for although I could imagine, the voice of the speaker, the words, and how spoken, still remain hidden. During the time of dressing quietness prevailed—a few whispers only I heard, but no talking. My toilet was at length completed, and my bed made, but there still remained the few minutes, of which Sister Faith had spoken, "to be spent in devotion." Yes, surely, I felt at that

moment that, so far as human aid was concerned, I was quite helpless. It is in these moments of our lives that we learn to depend on God alone.

At seven the bell rang for breakfast, and we were soon seated round the table. Sister Faith presided. After a short breakfast we had very long prayers. Sister Faith then called me aside to tell me that she had decided that "my beginning was to be made in the Children's Ward." "How delightful!" you exclaim. So many people say this. In taking visitors round the wards one often hears the remark, "I never could be a nurse unless, indeed, it were to children." Now, I am not only very fond of children, but I have had a great deal to do with them, yet I quite agree with a matron who once remarked to me, "I tell my nurses that there is little occasion to seek out-of-the-way places to exercise self-denial. Let them go into the Children's Ward for a month; if they do their work faithfully, they will find ample scope to deny themselves." It is one thing to pass through the wards and see a number of smiling children in the afternoon, but quite another to be patient with them all the day long. But surely, I am forgetting. The walking must be learnt before the running. I was telling you about Sister Faith, who impressed me with the fact that I was to be very obedient to the Sister in charge, and she added, "When we come here we give up our will entirely (I wonder whether anyone ever did do that?). We have no will of our own. Naturally we do not like to bear hardships; the self-denial that besets us on every side is distasteful to us, but having given up our will, all is easy."

Having passed through various corridors, I arrived in the Children's Ward. A long, bright, cheery ward with

twelve cots, and as they were all filled, we had the same number of patients. After assisting with the bathing of the little ones, and making the cots, I was told to get the brushes and clean the stove. Ah ! the bathing was easy, but how was this to be accomplished ? Sister Marguerite soon came to the rescue, and proceeded to give me the needful instructions. "First," she said, "remove the cinders and ashes ; this brush is used for applying the blacklead, these are the polishing brushes. Brush it well, and try to get a good polish." Shall I ever forget that stove ? Certainly I had not spared the blacklead, for there it was, looking like a coat of dull black paint, and proof against all brushing. By this time the fire had burnt up fiercely. My hands and face were much scorched ; I was getting wearied with my exertions, and I tell you this in confidence), felt inclined to cry. At this juncture Sister Marguerite appeared, remarking that "I had applied the blacklead much too lavishly." I had already found that out. Experience is a severe teacher. "You can waste no more time over it now," she continued, "for the doctor will soon be here. You must finish it afterwards." Next, she showed me the cupboard where the brooms and brushes were kept ; also how to sweep the ward. Then came the washing of the floors, which, being stained, were washed daily. I certainly need not complain of the cold after finishing that floor, for I was in a bath of perspiration. In removing my pail from the ward my foot slipped, and I was nearly down with its contents. As it was, I found that I had wetted one shoe, and the stocking was drenched. I went to Sister Marguerite, who to me (raw and uninitiated as I then was), appeared very formidable. "Yes," she said, "of

course you must change your shoes, but be quick back, and take care that it does not occur again." All this, by-the-bye, makes one feel very childish. I always did dislike being dictated to, but in the present case I could not help it; besides, I was in a Sisterhood. "When one is in Rome, one must do as Rome does," and at that time I had resolved to be very obedient.

I returned as quickly as possible. As I drew near the ward I heard the cries of a child, and the entreaty, "Oh, don't, don't." I found the doctor and Sister Marguerite busily engaged dressing a boy of seven with a very bad burn. I had never seen so bad a wound before, and the sight of it made me feel quite sick and faint, but I had determined above all things to try and be brave, for if sad to witness these things, how much more terrible to bear them. In a few minutes all was finished, the tears were wiped away, a doll was produced, and the little fellow was playing as happily as before. It is truly wonderful to notice how quickly the poor children forget their troubles in the enjoyment of a new toy, or, indeed, of an old rag doll. The doctor soon after left the ward, and Sister Marguerite called me to her to assist in dressing the minor wounds. After which, she told me to finish my stove. (How I disliked it! I could have wished that there was no such thing in existence). I succeeded in getting a polish, but as she truly observed, "It was by no means well done." It was then 10.30, and I was sent to get my lunch. I made my way into the sitting-room, where I found several other probationers (not so new as myself), busily pouring out coffee, and demolishing bread and dripping. We stood upon no ceremony at that meal, which was usually taken standing. One of

the probationers remarked presently, "You must learn to eat faster, or you will never have the benefit of a proper meal." I found this to be so, for it seemed as if one had only just begun when the unwelcome words (to those who were still hungry) sounded, "Now we will return thanks." On my return to the ward, Sister Marguerite told me that the "cleaning of the consulting-room in the out-patient department belonged to the Children's Ward probationer, and she wished me to do it at once." Armed with brooms and brushes, I made my way through the grounds until I arrived in the specified building and faced my old enemy, the stove. By this time I had certainly learnt the folly of applying too much blacklead, also as the fire had not been lighted I found my work easier. By-the-bye, I have since discovered that in cleaning stoves in my probationer days I started at the wrong end, for the sweeping comes first; however, it is of no use to cry over spilt milk, which was the result of ignorance.

The sweeping and cleaning the floor was more formidable, for although the room was small a large number of patients had been in the day before, bringing in with them a great deal of mud. It was finished at last, and I looked with dismay at my hands, which were certainly much the worse for use. I must tell you that "Sister Faith" had previously impressed me with the fact that she, *on no account*, allowed the use of gloves, even for the purpose of cleaning stoves, for they tended to foster pride. Hands could only be spoilt in appearance. This would have the beneficial effect of mortifying the flesh. The clock was striking the hour of twelve on my return to the ward. Sister Marguerite was padding splints for the operations which were to take

place in the afternoon (this was operating day). She took me at once through into the lavatory and showed me a number of draw-sheets, also how to wash them, telling me to "be quick and finish them and hang them on the bleach to dry." By this time I had learnt that in the Children's Ward no time was to be lost, and the sound of the dinner-bell at 12.30 found me in the ward ready to assist with the dinner, for many of the children are so small that they cannot feed themselves. Even the very little ones soon get to know who are to be operated upon from the fact that those for operation have no dinner. It was so to-day, and it was touching to notice the wistful glances cast on those who were fortunate enough to be having some dinner. Although the word "operation" does not strike terror into the hearts of children as it does in adult patients, yet the fact of losing a dinner is a stern reality. The children were at length satisfied, if one might judge by the rather startling expression of the elder ones, "I am full." Sister Marguerite then went to dinner, leaving me to wash the children, dust and straighten the ward. I dined afterwards, and on returning found her just carrying a child to the theatre. She gave me instructions for the afternoon and left me. It is the duty of the one left behind to prepare the beds for the reception of the patients after operation. This consists in supplying the beds with mackintoshes, hot water bottles, pads, cradles (to protect the limb), and last, but by no means least, old handkerchiefs and receivers in case of sickness, for the latter often follows the use of anæsthetics. Also in the Adult Wards we pull the beds out from the wall to make room for the stretcher. What to me seemed a never-ending day,

filled as it was with new experiences, ended at last. At 10 p.m. we retired to bed. I felt too tired and worn out to sleep. Will you think me very childish when I tell you that I buried my head under the clothes, and gave way to a quiet fit of weeping? I felt better after it, and towards morning fell asleep.

To any who think of taking up Nursing, I would say, do not allow the recital of *my* difficulties to discourage *you*. My training took place at a Sisterhood and was made unusually hard. At an ordinary Training School you will find your work light in comparison.

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CHAPTER III.

THE REAPER—DEATH.



IF the views of the Sisters were narrowed by the absence of contact with the outside world, the life itself was marked by much variety, although of such a sad nature that it became monotonous by its frequent repetition ; but to one quite new to the work, it certainly tended to relieve much of the pressure, caused by the strict observance of rules and regulations, which would otherwise have been most painfully felt.

In a hospital the first lesson to be learnt, is not only obedience, but the first principles of it. The directions must be obeyed implicitly and without question. If a girl is self-opinionated on her entry into hospital work, she will have it soon taken out of her (if it is to be done at all). The frequent snubbings, and above all, perhaps, the sight of the mischief into which self-will has led her, will convince her of her folly sooner than anything. The advantage derived will be apparent even to herself, on the admission of an accident for instance. If not

naturally of a cool temperament, the sight of an undue amount of suffering will cause her (as we sometimes say) "to lose her head." She has, however, learnt to obey, and instead of the poor useless probationer getting in everybody's way, we find one who, when told to do a thing, does it; it may have been but the holding of an injured limb, but the fact of her hands being brought into play liberated others for the important part of the work. In reference to the search for knowledge, forgiveness is freely accorded to all beginners for any amount of ignorance that they display, but only at first. A means of improvement is daily, and hourly, afforded, of which all are expected to avail themselves. To refrain from asking questions for fear of exposing ignorance is a great mistake, but the time when a Sister, or charge-nurse, is worried is a wrong one to choose. The exercise of a little tact in this respect will save many snubbings, and the unpleasantness of a refusal.

My first day of hospital work seemed never ending, my second was short in comparison. The floors had been finished satisfactorily, and the stove, when a bundle was brought in and laid on one of the beds; a woman followed, weeping. Sister Marguerite sent me at once to fetch a screen, and wondering very much for what purpose it could be wanted, I brought it, and put it round the bed. As Sister Marguerite unwrapped the bundle, I could hear the faint cries of a child—a pretty, fair-haired little boy of four years—and while she with coolness and rapidity dressed its wounds, the poor mother poured out her sad tale. "It was done all in a minute, and so sudden. Charlie (that is his name) is very fond of his bath, and although we are poor he has one every day as regular as possible. I poured out

the boiling water, and went to the pump to get the cold, when I thinks to myself, surely that's him a screaming. I thought he had fallen and hurt hissself, and ran to pick him up, but he had jumped into the water, boiling as it was, and he was crying terrific, so I took him out, wrapped him up, and brought him to you at once. He's all we've got, and the only bit of brightness in our lives, so I hopes that you will let us have him home soon." Sister Marguerite was silent, and I fancied that I saw a tear steal down her cheek. "The scald is very extensive," she replied presently. "But you won't keep him long," gasped the mother. "We shall not keep him long," Sister Marguerite returned gently, "the poor child is sinking fast; if you tell us where to find your husband we will send for him." Shall I ever forget the grief of that poor mother, as she cried, "I've killed him, I've killed him, the pretty crettur!" And then a new fear took possession of her, "What would her husband say?" The father soon arrived from the factory close by—a tall, dark, silent man—and he, weeping on one side of the bed, looked, I thought, reproachfully at his wife on the other. Side by side they silently left the ward, each heart wrung with anguish, for little Charlie had been called away by the Good Shepherd, who had said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not."

It has been said that there is no pathos in real suffering. No pathos in real grief. That it is only the recitals of the woes to which flesh is heir that fills the heart with sadness. To any who maintain this theory, I would say, go into our hospitals, you will find there grief and suffering enough to prove that there *is* pathos and misery in it all.

When England becomes callous and indifferent to the woes of her fellows, it will not be because the story has not been told often and graphically enough, but because she failed to see the objects for whom her aid and sympathy were sought. You contribute money, but go and see those whom your charity benefits, for you will find nothing in those bright, cheerful wards to shock you, and your presence will help to cheer the sufferers proving as it does, that rich and poor have one common bond of unity—SYMPATHY.

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CHAPTER IV.

FIRE LIGHTING.



HOW apt we are to pity ourselves. Nor do we realise the very large capacity we have for holding that commodity until circumstances occur which make large demands upon it. We find the supply is quite equal to the demand, however, and there is always a little left for the next occasion. Pity for myself began on the first day of ward work (when told to clean the stove), and I afterwards found daily opportunities for the exercise of it. One afternoon I was told that it was the duty of the Children's Ward probationer to light the fire in the theatre, for all operations. Poor unfortunate Children's Ward probationer! That reminds me that if a new comer happened to be young, she was often sent to the Children's Ward, and if she exhibited any signs of frivolity we knew that without doubt she would be sent there, the idea being that the drudgery would take it out of her. I was young, certainly, and I fear that I have to confess to the possession of the other quality also—frivolity.

I had become almost an expert in the art of stove polishing, but fire lighting I found to be quite a different matter. The fire was to be lighted at two o'clock, ready for the operations at 3 p.m. Now, I verily believe that that fire understood quite well that I was new. The pranks it played. One minute it would flare up and fill me with hope, then the paper and wood would die out, and with it would die the hope that had animated me. No one could possibly say that I did not try to light it, for each unsuccessful attempt was followed by another, yet 2.30 came, and found the fire still unlighted. It was with a mixture of pleasure and fear that I heard Sister Marguerite approaching. She did not scold me as I had expected, but showed me how to place the sticks so that the air might escape through them.

I have told you no particulars in reference to Sister Marguerite, who was a tall, self-possessed woman, aged—well, I cannot attempt to tell you that; she might be anything from twenty-eight to forty, nor can I imagine her ever having been young. Experience taught me that she was capable not only of training probationers, but also of keeping them in their places. At least she kept me in mine. She was good-looking, too, for she possessed finely chiselled features, which were regular and perfectly aquiline. Her complexion was dark, and the small quantity of hair exposed to view showed it to be pretty, with natural waves; the latter were almost hidden by her cap. She had a sweet, clear voice, which, even when scolding me (and I fear that I gave her many opportunities for doing so), she never raised. I seldom saw her laugh, and when she smiled it was such a melancholy apology for one that it sometimes escaped without my being able to

recognise it (this may have been lack of observation on my part). I have told you that she kept me in my place. This she did, neither with severity nor snubbing; the latter she would have considered vulgar. She had a way, however, which did duty for both. She exercised, unconsciously, a great deal of power over me. If she considered that I was becoming talkative, she checked me by simply being silent herself. I chafed in the harness sometimes, and grew fretful and impatient. This she regarded with evident surprise, which made me ashamed of myself at once. I was with Sister Marguerite for three months, yet although I admired and esteemed her for her upright conscientious behaviour, I never grew to love her, and I found that everybody regarded her with a kind of awe, but I heard no one express love.

I was telling you about the fire. The operations were later that day, so that when the surgeons arrived at 3.15 all was in readiness. I had "the same office to perform for the operations next day." A curious way of putting it, you will say, yet that was how the directions were given. There is nothing that makes one feel more foolish than to watch a thing being done with apparent ease by another, and to find on attempting to do the same thing that, after expending a large amount of labour, all one's efforts have proved unsuccessful.

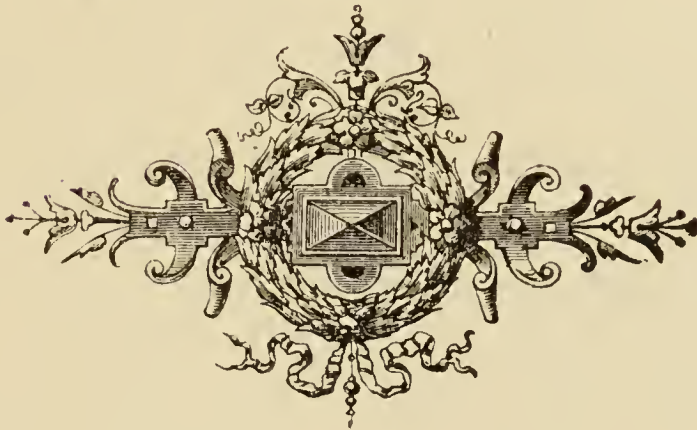
This was how I felt the next day after vainly trying to light the fire. But the operations were to take place punctually at 3, and it was already 2.15. What *could* I do? Was there no more paper? At this critical moment my eyes fell on some tenax (a kind of oakum) which was lying with some other dressings on the side

table. The very thing. The temptation was too strong for resistance, nor did I try to resist, but seized it, and by its aid the fire was soon burning brightly. Now the worst of indulging in a thing once is the fact that you do it again and again. Nor did I always confine myself to tenax, for not unfrequently it was with the addition of carbolic oil. My readers must not think that I had no qualms of conscience on the subject, for I had many; but it was a bad habit, and once formed, I felt I could not break myself of it. Alas! I always looked on the comical side of it. Poor fire, I thought, you, too, need dressing exactly as the wounds do; I think that tenax and zinc ointment will be nice for a change, it will help to stimulate you. And it certainly did; at least it stimulated the flames. Poor Sister Faith; what *would* she have said? Only the day before I had been standing by a ward Sister who had asked for an extra supply of wool. Sister Faith remarked, as she gave it, "Remember, my child, that the wool is not ours, but belongs to the Master, whom we serve, therefore let us be as careful with it as possible." And here was I ruthlessly burning up dressings—expensive ones probably. Surely she would say that they belonged to Him also, yet I tried again and again to light the fire, but my efforts were fruitless. I became unhappy about it, and at length resolved to tell Sister Faith. Now I had seen enough of her to know that she *could* be severe when occasion required it, and surely this was one. The idea made me cowardly. How would she punish me? I put it off from time to time; at last I could bear it no longer. Surely I deserved whatever she chose to inflict. I stopped several times before reaching the door of the room, and so much did I dread

the interview that, as I knocked, I hoped that she was not there. She was, however. "Come in," she answered. But once inside I found it difficult to find anything to say. "If you are not busy, Sister, I should like to speak to you a minute," I said at last. "I am quite at liberty, my child; shut the door and come here. What is the the trouble?" (she evidently knew that there was one). I told her as well as I was able of my wrong doing. She drew me towards her and kissed me when I had finished, remarking, "You poor child, all this trouble might have been saved had you resolved, after falling into sin the first time, not to do so again. I believe you really wish to do right, and I want you to feel, in spite of what has taken place, that I trust you implicitly. Let me see," she said, musingly, "you are eighteen, and having only just left school cannot have been brought out. I had rather that it should be so, for it leaves better material to work upon." Then, she added, turning to me and speaking with apparent effort, "I fear that I must punish you, and so must think of a suitable way of doing so, for it will teach you a lesson in future. It is evident that the fire lighting is the trouble, so I give you the lodge fire to light each morning as extra work," and once more taking my hand kindly, she kissed me and sent me back to the ward.

I fear that in explaining the character of Sister Faith it is impossible to do her justice. She was as brave and courageous as she was good. If she appeared hard it was only a sense of duty that made her so. She held one-sided views, you will say. Possibly; but these views were really hers, and they became part of her existence. We shall surely be judged, not according to

the views we entertain, but by the way in which we carry them out. Sister Faith shrank from nothing, and her life was an exceptional example of unselfishness and self-denial.





CHAPTER V.

MY UNIFORM.



IN the afternoon of the following day I was told that as there was time I could have an hour off duty. This was not to be regarded as a right, but as a privilege, which was always granted when it could be arranged. I went in search of Sister Faith to ask permission to go out for a walk. "A walk!" she exclaimed, in astonishment. "My child, I thought that you knew better. The Sisters never take walks, unless they have something useful in view, the visiting of the sick, for instance. Life is too real to be frittered away in walking. If it is a breath of fresh air that you require there is the garden. Have you no stockings to mend? If you have, take them with you, and sit and mend them. You will thus serve a double purpose."

I returned crestfallen, but not having been there sufficiently long to make holes, I made my way into the garden without the stockings.

On Sundays we were always permitted to go outside

to the church services. The day came at last (dear me, how long that week seemed), and it was with great pleasure that I made my way to my room to dress for church. A great stir and bustle was being made by the other probationers, who, like myself, had stayed in the ward until the last minute. But whose were these things on my bed? Sister Miriam came forward to explain. "This is your bonnet and cloak," she said, "you will wear them during the first year of probation. Afterwards your uniform will be different. As it is so simple I think you will find little difficulty in putting it on, and what fits one usually fits another. You are late in dressing (she continued), but as we make it a rule never to be late for church you must make all possible haste. You will walk with me to-day; I will wait for you downstairs." One by one the Sisters teemed out, and I was left alone. The cloak was very big, and I could quite imagine its fitting anybody, even Sir Roger; there was in fact no fit in it, but this was really getting quite exciting. A bonnet! I had never worn one and the idea was quite novel. I took it up and examined it. How ugly; it did not look well in the hand, it would, perhaps, look better on the head. I adjusted it, and looked hopefully for its reflection in my tiny glass. No—fearful, frightful! Tears of mortification rose to my eyes, and the bonnet I sent spinning across to the other side of the room. I cannot define the motive that prompted the action, nor give reason for the act itself; perhaps it was the same feeling which caused me to force away the tears which would, I reflected, make my eyes red, namely, our old enemy—pride. Soon I heard Sister Miriam's step on the stair, and her voice calling me. I hastily picked up the unfortunate bonnet, and

readjusted it, not because I had become more resigned to it, but that I feared the punishment awaiting me. We arrived in good time at the church, for it was quite near. Ah! how weak and vain is human nature. Instead of worshipping God in His house my thoughts were wandering; not far it is true, for they only reached my head and rested on my bonnet, yet they were as far from Him as if a whole universe lay between. Why need I make a sight of myself with that ugly bonnet? Ah! how strained my hair felt, drawn back as it was so unnaturally from my face. Then came remorse and shame, and with it the question, should I ever become a Sister, a true one, worthy the name? Filled with a sense of my selfishness and pride I turned wearily from the church.





CHAPTER VI.

AMONGST THE CHILDREN.



THE children for the most part are very happy, and many of them sing so lustily that it is sometimes difficult to realise that some are very ill. To each ward belongs a convalescent (or play) room. We find this a great convenience for them, for there children who are able can romp and make a great deal of noise without fear of check. Also it keeps the ward cooler and quieter for those who are ill. We are obliged to forbid singing until rather late in the day, as it disturbs the other patients—Georgie was an exception to the rule, for his little voice sounded forth soon after the completion of his washing arrangements. This little fellow, of six years of age, had been left at home by his mother to take care of his little sister—I have been surprised to notice the number of things that fall to the share of these poor children to do. Often both parents turn out to earn the bread for themselves and family. Georgie was busy with a new toy that had been given him, when he heard cries from his sister, whose pinafore

had caught fire. With all the courage of the little hero that he was, he rushed to her and succeeded in extinguishing the flames, but he burnt himself very extensively in doing so. He was brought to us at once, and after his wounds were dressed he lay quite still. Presently he asked anxiously "how Annie (his sister) was." We told him that "although much frightened, she was scarcely burnt at all." "Ah!" he said (his face brightening), "then it isn't so bad (the pain I mean)—better me than her, and I will try and be patient, but I'm afeared I shall cry out. Do you think I could sing a bit? I specs you allows nothin' but psalms and hymns here. I can sing about the 'liver'—at least I know the chorus of it :

" ' There is one more river,
And that's the river of Jordan ;
There's one more river,
And that's the river of Life.' "

Thinking it might excite him, we confined him to one verse. He could not say river, and it was very amusing to hear him sing about the "Liver of Life." The little fellow quickly recovered his spirits, and his only remaining trouble was the daily dressing. To encourage him to be brave, we allowed him to sing. "Sing, Georgie," we used to say, as the tears made their appearance—"Sing!" Then his voice would break out piteously : "There's one more liver"—"oh, it's hurting." "Try and sing, Georgie!" "Do you remember what comes next?" "That's the liver of Jor-or-dan." And here the poor child would be quite overcome, and could sing no more. The dressings became less painful after a time, and he was one of the jolliest little boys in the ward.

We had a little girl in at the same time who had a

drunken mother. Returning home rather more intoxicated than usual one night, she kicked the poor child twice with her heavy boots, making two large wounds in the intestines. Nothing could be done for her, and she lingered only for a few weeks. A little girl lying in the next cot had had both legs completely crushed below the knee by a train. The door of the carriage in which she travelled had not been fastened; she leaned against it, overbalanced herself, and fell out. The other portion of her body escaped without injury. She afterwards came back to us, for artificial legs and feet, with which, although unable to run, she could walk with ease. Hospital life has a beneficial effect upon the children in many ways. In the first place, before treating them with medicine, they are bathed. Some of them never had a bath in their lives, they imagine that they will be drowned, and the dirt seems determined not to leave them. I can only describe the skin as being black. One's thoughts naturally turn to their mothers: what sort of women can they be? It is not the one or two baths that make them clean, but a succession; we give them every day if possible.

Not the least trouble is the state of their heads, which are—well, to say the least of it, very lively, and strong measures must be taken (I will draw the veil here); also their habits are bad, we try and teach them to say “Please” and “Thank you,” and really after a time they become quite civilized. We had one boy who was unusually dense and uncultivated. We carried the bread and butter round in baskets and asked each child how many pieces they would take, this prevented waste also; they could always have more if they could take it. I stopped on reaching him, and asked:

“How many pieces, Johnny?”

“Two!”

“Can’t you say anything else?”

“Three!”

“Nothing else?”

“Four!”

“Can you say nothing else?”

“Yes, big ’uns.”

I told him “in future that he must say ‘Please,’ and ‘Thank you.’” Some of the children belong to the middle classes, and are well behaved.

Many of the medical illnesses are caused only by the absence of cleanliness and proper food. We give them a liberal diet, which consists principally of milk, cocoa,* puddings, etc. They are often treated without medicine and go home quite well. One of the mothers told me that she “really scarcely knew her own child again.” Some of the parents have curious ideas. We had a little girl who came in with hydrophobia, from the effects of which she was dying; she was so pretty that it seemed the more sad to see her so ill, yet the mother came again and again, apparently quite unmoved. In the afternoon before she died, she brought some “everlasting flowers” for her to play with, remarking, “They will do to make a wreath for her afterwards.” As I made the little wreath, after the poor child’s death, I could not help wondering whether poverty really did deprive these poor women of proper feeling? The parents are generally very pleased to have the children home again, but they, on the other hand, are seldom anxious to go, and the event of their

* Cadbury’s cocoa is invaluable as a nourishing diet for children and invalids. May be had of all chemists and grocers throughout Great Britain.

leaving is celebrated by much crying. I remember being greatly amused at a little girl who was in the hospital for a fortnight. She had been treated for a slight sprain, caused by a fall from a chair. At the end of a week, being quite well, the doctor dismissed her, yet she begged so hard to be allowed to stay, that he acceded to her wishes, and she stayed an extra week; but one morning, when going his rounds, he said decidedly, "This child *must* go home; let her mother be sent for to fetch her." "Ah," she said, to a boy who was standing near, "Never mind, I shall soon be back, for I shall tumble down, and hurt myself again."

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CHAPTER VII.

OUT-PATIENT DEPARTMENT.



THE novelty of acting as Children's Ward probationer had worn off, when one morning Sister Faith told me that she wished me "to help to receive the out-patients" (there were often nearly 200 who had come on behalf of themselves and family to see the doctor). A motley group they were; all sorts and conditions of men were certainly represented there. There might be seen poor, inefficiently clothed creatures, looking terribly ill. Over-dressed women there were also, whom Sister Faith boldly accosted, asking them "How it was that they could not afford to pay for a doctor at home? *They could dress.*" The answer invariably given was, "The clothes had been given." Bright young girls also, with ruddy faces, who had come, maybe, only for a repetition of cough medicine. Then there were the poor, puny babies, held by their mothers. Emanating from all was a faint, unwholesome smell, which told of small ill-ventilated dwellings. Poor things! No wonder they were ill. And how they

fought for place! There, as everywhere, might be seen the strong pushing against the weak. The principal part of our duty was to prevent this by giving them each a number as they came in. Afterwards we acted as kind of policemen, by insisting on those being served early who came first. I have omitted to mention the men—only a few came, and the doctors made it a rule to see them first, for their time, as bread-winners, was valuable. The time for their arrival was between the hours of nine and eleven. Two of us sat at a table, in front of a kind of half door, round which were gathered the patients. The younger Sister took down the name and address of each whilst the other numbered the bottle, and gave them letters, the number of which corresponded with the bottle, and they saw the doctor according to these numbers. Thus, the one who came first was labelled “1,” and saw the doctor and received her medicine first. I remember once being considerably disconcerted by a poor deaf woman whom I asked her name. The scene was something like this:—

“What is your name?”

“Bad leg.”

“No! What is your name?”

“Bad leg” (more emphatically).

“I want to know what your name is.”

“Bad leg.”

In desperation I turned to a man who was standing by, and said, “Will you, please, ask her name?” When the question had been repeated once or twice, she answered, “Oh, I beg your pardon, mum; I thought you said, ‘What do you ail?’ My name is Nancy Brown.”

At eleven o’clock a cheap meal is served, which may be had for the small sum of threepence, and the patients

wait in a large well-heated hall until their number is called.

We found that the men usually allowed themselves to get far more ill than the women before coming to see the doctor. One poor man I noticed, the first day that I was with the out-patients, who looked terribly ill, and as he appeared to be unable to walk, I fetched the house-surgeon, who admitted him at once. As soon as he was in bed and sufficiently rested, the doctor sounded him, whilst I helped to support him during the time that he sat up. The doctor told him to say "ninety-nine."

"Ninety-nine."

"Now, say, one, two, three."

"One, two, three."

"Now ninety-nine."

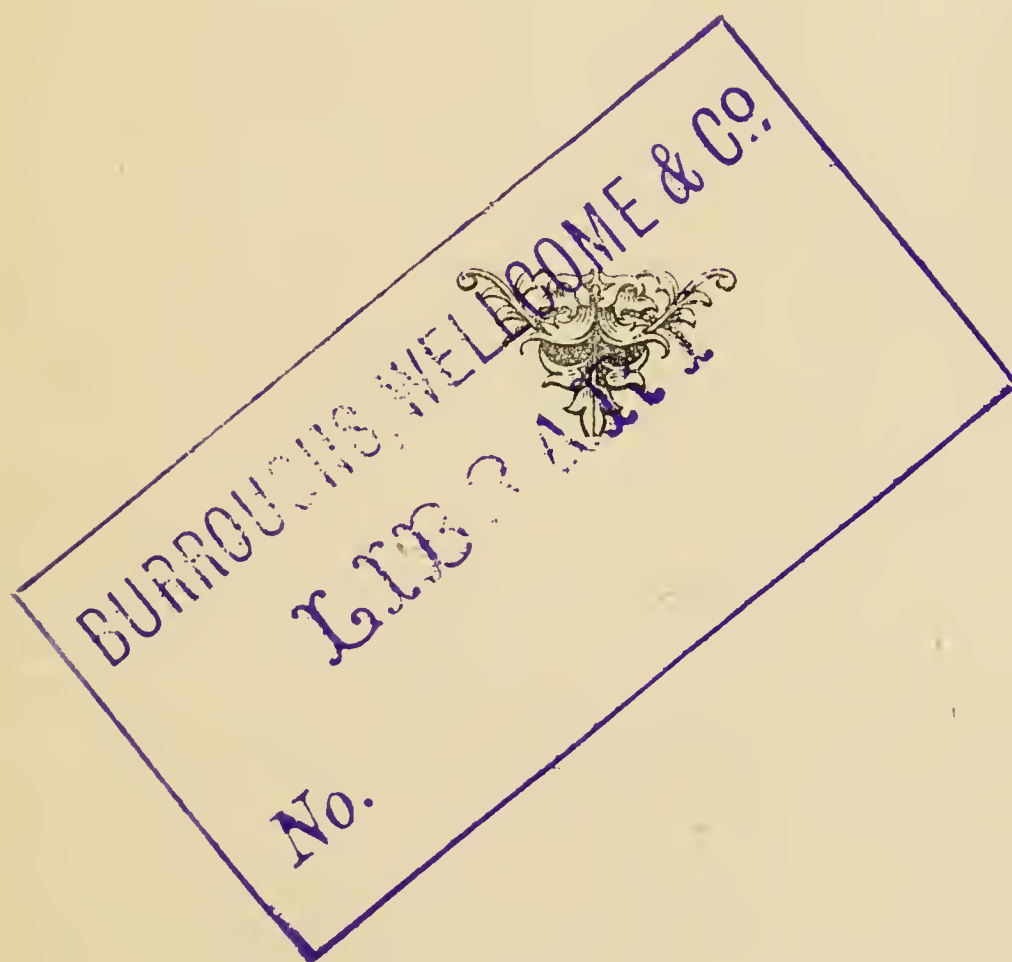
"Ninety-nine."

"Ninety-nine again."

"A hundred, sir," gasped the poor fellow, who was evidently so tired that he wished to rest. "We will let him lie down now," said the doctor, who could not forbear a smile. But his was a very serious case, and he died when he had only been in the hospital a few hours. His wife was heart-broken, but said that "she had been expecting it for some time." When we asked her to bring him a clean shirt, she brought him one that had been well starched. I may add, that she previously inserted mourning studs, both in front and at the wrists, thus putting him in mourning for himself. The effect was most startling.

"Familiarity breeds contempt" is often said. There are exceptions to every rule. The sight of the dead, and dying, is one. Familiar with them we necessarily are, for they become part of our life. Yet respect is

maintained through it all, and the horror and dread with which death is surrounded remains. We were very fond of receiving the out-patients, the principal reason being that restrictions for the time were at an end. It is curious to notice how irksome the control of others becomes. In the Sisterhood, the hospital, the world, everywhere, humanity is the same. But man is a free agent, and in refusing to use the will that God has given him, he despises one of His good gifts, for which he, and he alone, is responsible.





CHAPTER VIII.

A LONG NIGHT—THE NURSE'S CAP.



WHEN my caps were given me, the object of wearing them was explained. One of the reasons given was the soothing effect that it had upon the minds of the patients, assuring them, as it did, of the presence of the nurse. This assurance, I was told, even extended to the delirious and mentally afflicted. An opportunity of proving this statement was soon afforded me. I had been nursing for two years, when one evening Sister Faith called me to her room, remarking, "An application has come for the services of a Sister, and I am sending you. The patient is a poor woman suffering both from cancer and delirium tremens; she is too weak to be violent, and so I think that you will be able to manage her."

It was 9.30 p.m., and after receiving the address, I bade farewell to the hospital and its inmates, and started on my errand. This was my first departure in private nursing, and the one to which I had for so long been

looking forward with great pleasure. Yet, was it the darkness of the night that damped my ardour, or could it be an apprehension of what lay before me? I cannot say, yet it was with a heavy heart that I left the hospital behind me, threading my way through various courts and alleys, until I arrived at length before a poor, tumble-down cottage, answering the description given. In reply to my inquiry whether I was expected there, I was answered in the affirmative, and, mounting a rickety staircase, I found myself face to face with my patient. Shall I ever forget her? A big, bloated woman, with wild, glaring eyes, and hair that streamed in tangled masses over her face. She was asleep on my arrival, yet on that face, fearful even in repose, were left the unmistakable marks of drink. A little square table was standing by her on which were arranged basins, bottles, and jugs, containing spirituous and malt liquors. These were for the night I was told. "The doctor says as how she's dyin', so it's no use takin' of 'em away. She swears dreadful when anybody touches 'em. Yesterday, she pulled Nellie's (that's her gal's) hair out by the roots for doin' it. My! didn't she just drop 'em down sharp. I'm no relation," the woman continued, "but just a neighbour, has as come out o' kindness like. Nellie's afear'd of her, so I says you just better go up to the 'Orspital and get a Sister, they say the ladies up there are kindness itself, they'll come to any poor critter, and they knows how to manage the likes o' her. Now, I'll say good night to you," for she said, confidentially, "The night's allers the worst time, she takes a sight o' drink in the day, and at night she cusses awful." "Has she all she requires," I asked, gazing around for the customary allowance of milk and beef

tea? "Bless you, she won't have none; all she cares for is drink, and she *will* have it. Now, good night, and thank you kindly for comin'." I heard the door bang, and knew that she was gone.

How dreadful to see a woman sink so low, I thought, yet even *she* had been good once. And was it not possible that part of the good remained? My thoughts were interrupted by a movement from the bed, a foot was thrust out, and a voice cried, "I'll see after 'em, the old black devils; they're not a goin' to stand there grinnin' no longer. No! no! no! Not if I murder 'em. I'm not above it," she exclaimed, triumphantly. "I'll stop their grin. They've laughed and grinned at me long enough. I'll be the one to hang 'em. I'd enjoy it, that I would! Devils got no bodies they tell me. Ha! ha! I'll soon find out what they're made of." Now was my time to speak. "Don't distress yourself," I said, laying my hand on her's. "See, I am going to shake your pillow, and you will soon fall asleep again." "Who be you?" she exclaimed, seizing my hand with a sudden grip. "I am one of the Sisters from the hospital close by," I answered, trying to be calm. "I have come to take such care of you." Her manner changed instantly. "The dear critter, she's come to take care of me she have. Grin away, you hungry devils. You can go to hell by yourselves; can't they, you gentle dear?" "There is no occasion for anyone to go there," I answered, smoothing back her hair. She pulled the bed clothes over her head, and with a smothered "Ha! ha! ha," she fell asleep.

The clock in the neighbouring church had struck the hour of twelve, when there was another movement in the direction of the bed. A jug standing near was

uplifted, and a copious draught taken. I decided that it would be better not to speak, for the poor thing might fall asleep again. "I'll kill 'em, I'll kill 'em," again burst from her lips. I had heard that the hand imparted a kind of magnetism which soothed, even when other things failed. Yes! I would try it. With something akin to fear, I crept towards the bed, and laid my hand gently on her's. She gazed at me with a look of wonder, and then her eyes, suddenly lighted with a fiendish gleam, as they fell on my offending cap. "Ah! you white-headed devil, I've got you now. I *can* do it! Got no knife, indeed! Ha! ha! I'll make the blood fly. You can't foil old Nancy with all your soft words." I tried to speak, but in vain. The only magnetism felt was experienced by myself, for two large hands were clasped around me, as she exclaimed again, "White-headed devil! I've got you now." A body was pressed heavily against me, and I fell to the ground.

The sound of my fall aroused her to sudden energy, she seized and tore off my cap, crying as she did so, "I'll show you what I think of a white-headed devil. Black and white are all alike to me. I'll show you!" With a firm grip she caught my hair, which was long, and dragged me by it, to the other side of the room. I vainly tried to rise. One foot was pressed heavily against the side of my chest, the other was uplifted, high above my throat, to strike. One of our leading medical men, recently asked at a large medical meeting, "Whether any present had ever known a patient to be afraid to die?" Only two cases had been traced, yet I confess, that at that moment, I felt sadly frightened as the prospect of death presented itself. Perhaps it was the instrument that I thought was to accomplish it—

the heel of a mad woman ! In that one moment, so many thoughts thrust themselves in. The foot, although large and heavy; was bare ; to be stamped to death by it would be both lingering and painful. Would my friends hear of my death ? I was in a complete bath of perspiration. As a drowning man clutches at a straw, I wondered what the effect of a determined voice would be ? I tried it. " Don't do that ! don't do that ! " I cried, with authority. Never shall I forget the sense of relief I experienced, as the poor woman loosened her hold on my hair, removed her foot, and I was free. Why need I stay ? I could at least get assistance. Yet might she not attempt to take her own life ? Yes ! I must remain. The poor creature had by this time shot across the room, and her next craze was to kill the imaginary insects on the wall. This continued for an hour, when I persuaded her to get into bed ; but it was only to sit bolt upright, and give me directions to kill the insects to which she pointed. I tried to obey her orders by giving the wall sundry punches, as I had seen her do ; yet if at any moment my energy flagged, the same wild cry issued from her lips, " Kill 'em ! kill 'em ! " At the end of three hours she became exhausted, and fell asleep. On the entrance of the neighbour, the poor creature gazed listlessly around her ; but from that stupor she never rallied. Six years have elapsed since then, yet every detail of that terrible night is fastened with distinctiveness on my memory, and surely coupled with it is the grateful remembrance of my preservation.*

* The instance given proves the fact that it requires special qualifications for special work. Mental study forms a branch of itself. Whilst in ordinary nursing it needs the power to lead, in mental nursing it requires the authority to command.



CHAPTER IX.

THE MISER.



OUR wanderings often lead us into curious places, bringing us in contact with the funniest of people ; at least, so I thought, as I found myself, face to face, with the tiniest and most wizened old man that I had ever beheld. There was also something in him which was at once both cunning and repulsive. A small lean man, with sharp, deep set eyes, having the peculiarity of not resting for two seconds in the same place, and they certainly never, by the smallest chance, looked you straight in the face. He had a small determined mouth, with thin compressed lips, and a religious nose, inasmuch that it was celestial (pointing upwards). Had the skin been less shrivelled, one would say that it resembled old parchment (at least the colour was the same). A few red bristles, not unlike those of the hedgehog, did duty for hair, whilst a beard, exactly matching the hair of the head, completed the picture.

"So you're the nurse as 'as come to nurse my wife," he croaked out.

"Yes," I said, "I hope that she will soon be feeling much better. I see that you have your horse and cart here. Have we far to go?"

"Well," he answered, looking up furtively from under his shaggy brows, "It's something mor'n three miles, so you ken jump up as fast as you like. We're no carriage folk, so if you're too fine a lady for the cart, you'd better walk, portmanteau and all. We don't want no fine ladies 'ere," he said, with a little chuckle at his own cleverness.

"I think that the cart will be most comfortable," I answered, climbing into it. If the cart was, the ride certainly was not, for we went at such a slow, jog-trot pace that, with the addition of a little music, together with a tiny stretch of imagination, a vision of the "Dead March" would certainly have presented itself. We were silent for a few minutes. At length I broke the stillness by venturing to inquire about his wife.

"*She* won't last long," he returned, with a grunt of satisfaction. "She 'a bin a mint of expense to me. She ain't done no work for the last three months. Them as don't work, shan't eat, says I; leastways that's the rule. Not that I've abided by it, lately, for she've had many a morsel that she've not earned; no, nor never will. The last day she went into the field to pick potatoes were a Thursday. I remember it as well as if it were yesterday. The ice were that 'ard when I come to wash myself that I had to break it with a 'ammer.' The old woman never got up, so I goes up into the chamber t'er, 'Oh, Bill,' says she, clinging to me, 'I can't go out in the cold this morning, I feel

so faint.' Now, you know, I never did care for a wench, as gave way, so I answers up sharp like, 'Where's your spirit, Sal? Earn your bread, lass! Yer eats plenty and you can't expect me to work for you.' She gave a kind of shiver, I can see her now, as plain as plain; then she gets up and comes down to breakfast. Breakfast says I, but there—she didn't eat any. She just drank down two cups of tea, said she were very thirsty, and went to work. When I came home to dinner she were abed, so I went up to 'er, to give 'er a bit of my mind for 'er laziness. 'Look here, Bill!' she says, 'I really can't 'elp it.' (I believe she said she fainted in the field, or summat). Well, there she 'a bin ever since. Now, I always contend that a woman is very much like an old hoss (horse), as soon as they begin to drop down in the mouth, they'd far better die out o' the way. Far less expensive, far less expensive. There's no beast so expensive as a woman. Yet you 'ave the law down on you if you shoot 'em."

Having delivered himself thus, he relaxed into silence. Ah! surely, I thought, as I looked at him, if this man had a mind, how it must have deteriorated, becoming indeed, as cramped and deformed as himself. A feeling of fear crept over me, and I wished the journey had ended. Sundry whacks were given to the old hack of a horse. A poor starved thing not unlike the "old hoss" to which he had just likened his wife. "What nourishment does your wife take?" I asked, presently.

"You needn't worrit yerself about what *she* takes, *she* takes plenty. Only yesterday she drank a half pot o' porter. This mornin' I left her with a cup o' milk. If that's gone, all I ken say is, it don't ought to be."

“Does she fancy nothing else?” I asked again.

“Fancy! why woman alive, do you think I’m going to give her what she fancies? I’m not a fool! Bless you, she fancies something every day, but she don’t get it. No, no,” he cried, “that she don’t; and you’d best not let me find you giving her anything but what I tells you. But there,” he said, with a grim smile, “you won’t find much to give ’er, leastways not in the ’ouse, and there’s no shops. I gets my bits o’ things gave to me up at the Hall, so it don’t cost me much for feed, and it won’t cost me much for anybody else, if I can help it.”

“Have you no doctors?” I asked.

“Doctors? thieves, you mean! I had one once; he paid two visits, and I paid him three shillings down in hard cash for doin’ nothin’. He said he couldn’t cure her, she was in a decline, so I told him not to come again.”

We passed through several villages, and at last arrived at a hamlet, and stopped before a tiny dilapidated cottage. “There,” he said, with a grim smile, as he opened the door, “you won’t find much there worth your while stealing; I turns everything into hard cash. Now I’m going to ’ave some tea.” The water was boiling, which was poured on the stale leaves, and some bread, also stale, was fetched out of the cupboard, with some dripping.

“I am going up to see your wife, and hear what she would like,” I said.

“You ken go up and see her if you like, but don’t I tell you she ’a got some milk, or ought to have!”

After mounting the stairs, I found myself in a small, low-roofed room, in the corner of which stood a tiny wooden bedstead, and on it the emaciated form of a poor frightened woman.

“ Ah ! ” she said, stretching out her bony hand, “ right glad I am to see you. It’s a poor place for you to come to. May the Lord reward you for coming. I’ve been ill a long time, and I think it’s time I was taken. They tell me I cost plenty, and I’m sure I try not, but I hear that the heavenly Father is rich, so He won’t miss what I have. Do you think He will ? ” she asked, appealingly.

I was conscious of a little choking sensation as I brushed away a tear, and tried to assure her of the “ plenty that awaited her in heaven.” A long, weary night ensued, and in the morning she was so much worse that I sent for the doctor. It was all too late, the poor woman was beyond the reach of earthly aid. The doctor remarked to her husband, “ You had better not go out this morning, for she cannot last long.”

“ Look you here, sir,” he returned, “ I lost a half day’s work the day we married, I ’spose I shall ha’ to lose another half the day o’ the fooneal, but I don’t intend to lose one on the day she dies. Time is money, bless yer, and I ’spose she ken die without me.”

There was no necessity for the sacrifice: In the space of a few minutes the poor woman passed quietly away. Her lips moved, and I bent near to catch the words “ Plenty in heaven,” she said, “ Plen-ty in heaven.” Her voice sank to a whisper, and I knew that she was gone.





CHAPTER X.

THE SPIRITUAL PART OF THE WORK.



IT had been a long wearying day with the out-patients. But our 'nine o'clock supper was over, and a vision of the repose so near at hand was very welcome. So near, did I say? Ah! yes. "So near, but yet so far away," for I was to go to a case that night. The patient was a poor woman. It seems so much easier to give up a night's rest for the poor. Perhaps not because they commend themselves to our sympathy more; but from the fact that the rich are seldom without friends, whilst the poor have to shift for themselves.

"Remember, my child," said Sister Faith, "that after all, nursing these poor bodies is but a stepping stone to that which is of far greater importance—their spiritual welfare. In neglecting the latter, you fulfil only half your mission. Many of these poor creatures have a horror of church, and if asked to see a clergyman, they think at once that they are going to die. If you have an opportunity of speaking a helpful word to your patient, do not

miss it." I promised with great reluctance, for I was not only young, but very shy.

On my arrival at the house, I found that the patient was very ill, for she was suffering both from an attack of peritonitis and pneumonia. Poor people often imagine that water is injurious to a sick person, hence the dirty condition in which we often find them. This patient was no exception to the rule, for she had not been washed for over a week. Also, the houses are often overcrowded, both as regards people and furniture. A small room contains sometimes as many as three chests of drawers, the tops of which are often completely covered with ornaments, in the shape of tumblers turned upside down, dirty wax and paper flowers are strewn about, besides many other abominations. Then to get to the bed there are often numbers of things to be waded over; it puts one rather in mind of the sea. Our first care is the patient, next the disposal of as much useless lumber as possible, together with its accompaniment—dust and dirt. The window we find invariably closed, and the friends of the patient look very much frightened at the prospect of the admission of fresh air. And washing the poor "crittur!" monstrous. There are no patients who do not derive benefit from a breath of fresh air, although in some few cases it is necessary to do it by the medium of another room. Also we sometimes cover the patient with a rug during the airing of the sick apartment by the window. After attending to these details, besides poulticing and feeding the poor woman, I thought of my promise to Sister Faith. It appeared a most formidable undertaking, yet suppose the poor thing should die, and this appeared extremely likely.

"Would she like the clergyman to come and see her?"

"No! the doctor says, says he, 'You must cheer up, and try and get better, take all the nourishment you can.' Well, I say, I don't know about all I *can*. I takes all I *ken get*."

"Would you like me to read to you?" I asked, timidly.

In a dreamy way she answered "Yes."

I read a few verses from that well-worn chapter, the 14th of St. John. I put down the Bible, but she gave me no encouragement to continue. Had she been listening? I tried to impress upon her the idea that although these poor bodies of ours might suffer, and even die, that the Lord Jesus was preparing mansions for us in heaven, for He had said, "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." They were being prepared for those who loved and trusted Him. "Did she do that?" She made no answer.

Trying to rouse her, I asked, "Do you know who He is, and what He has done for you?"

At length, in a dreamy way, the answer came, "Well, marm, you mayn't believe it, but I ha' lived 'ere twenty years, and don't know none o' my neighbours."

I felt considerably crestfallen by this reply, but was saved any further conversation from the fact that she had fallen asleep.

One of the pleasing features in cottage nursing is the sight of their unselfish devotion to each other. No need to question here who will look after the patient in our absence, for there will be quite a number of volunteers. Most of them neighbours who will strip themselves of

anything to give to the sick one. Also great anxiety is shown that the nurse may be well taken care of. I remember once going to a cottage to nurse a child suffering with scarlet fever (the mother was too ill to nurse her). The people were poor, and the mother was evidently much exercised in her mind to know what to provide for the nurse's dinner ; but I was rather startled by her first question, as she opened the door in answer to my knock, for she immediately asked me whether I liked " pig's fry." I begged her to buy nothing extra for me, as I wished to have exactly the same as they had themselves ; yet I was not quite prepared for the sight of a little tray on which rested a small plate filled with a large quantity of dirty baked pudding. There was also a piece of bread and butter which, having no plate to rest upon, lay upon the tray directly over a cushion of linseed-meal, for this identical tray I had just sent down filled with used poultices that had evidently been accumulating in the sick room for days ; but these poor things generally mean well, which says volumes for them. We did a great deal of nursing in small houses, for we nursed gratuitously ; also we went much amongst the people, and where necessary persuaded them to come into the hospital for treatment.

I remember once being in Sister Faith's room when one of the Sisters appeared, who told of a girl who, although not ill, needed to be removed from the house in which she was living. Sister Faith agreed to the proposition at once, and mentioned the room in which she could be put. " May she have a fire ? " Sister Grace asked. Sister Faith's consent made the questioner quite bold, for she inquired again, " Can she have some carpet put down by her bed ? " " No ! most

certainly not, we must not encourage girls in their wrong doing, we bring them here to convince them of it," was the rejoinder. Sister Grace was silent. "What are you thinking about, my child?" was the next question. "I was thinking of Christ's words, when He said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto *Me*.' And if *He* were here you surely would allow *Him* these comforts." "That is my answer; you must accept it as final," Sister Faith returned, quietly, and then turning to me she said, "I must speak to Sister Grace when she is better prepared to listen; her arguments are foolish, for if the dear Lord Jesus were here, He should have the best room." I could not help thinking that the arguments were altogether curious.

I have seen many sad sights during my nursing career, perhaps the saddest of all is what is commonly spoken of as "hard deaths," that is to say, the sight of those who know that they are dying, and realise the fact. This is seldom the case, for the cessation of life is often a gradual one, and as the vital energies ebb, the mental power of realising the fact becomes dull. I have seen two of these hard deaths; I shall never forget them, and hope never to see another. My own opinion is, that usually, the agony of death is only for those who are watching; great fear of the king of terrors is seldom depicted on the faces of the dying. Many have a knowledge that they are afflicted with a mortal illness, but it is only when they are beginning to feel ill that they realise that they may die. It is then that we so often see the dregs of a mis-spent life offered up to God; or sadder still, the feeling of forlorn hopelessness that over-

takes them, and that recalls me to my present patient. She, at least, realises the emptiness of the world. "Oh! for life," she cried, "gaiety I will have, nor must it be denied. Go to church? I am too old for that—church-going is for the young and foolish. Theatres, dinner parties, musical evenings for me. At homes are tame, but they are the fashion, and I must go. Oh! for new entertainments. Why do they not invent other amusements?" In the midst of these scenes gout seized her, and with it days and nights of pain ensued. "You must try and stay in bed this evening," said her attendant. "If I cannot stand I must sit," she cried, "I *can*, I *must* go." Until a late hour she mingled with the gay, and her laugh resounded through the room. The warning voice had spoken loudly it is true, but yet not loudly enough, for late hours, gaiety, and a disregard for health, has brought in its train death, and here she lies, waiting for the messenger to come. "Have I drank life to the dregs," she cries, "and is there nothing more? Oh! that I were the merest beggar. They have happiness, and a crust, and I, for me, there is nothing but the grave. Servants and attendants obeyed my mandates, friends humoured my every wish, and caprice, they come now, but to inquire; cannot they, cannot my immense wealth save me? Nothing will I spare. And does my influence go for nothing?" The answer comes, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "They who sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." "You have lived for the world; Behold! you have it, and it mocks you." I have heard a great deal said in reference to the spirit asserting itself, but I believe that there is such a thing as the Spirit of God asserting itself. It says: "Soul! you were made for something better. This

people have I formed for Myself, they shall show forth My praise." "Why this life of sin?"

Ah ! yes. The anatomists, the physiologists, and the chemists have all declared their inability to find even the traces of a soul in the physical organism. But does their inability to find it prove the non-existence of it? As well say that, because you cannot see the air, that you no longer breathe it. As well say that because, to the naked eye, but a few planets are visible, that the others have ceased to exist. There *is* such a thing as a soul. But you say that the soul being invisible, is hidden from the eyes of man ; yet we see, if not the soul, the traces of one. The worldling in his search for pleasure had forgotten the fact that he possessed a soul ; but death advances, and behold it asserts itself. The scoffer has derided the idea of such a possession, when, lo ! death overtakes him, and he, who has hitherto laughed, cries for mercy. Nor does the atheist escape, for there comes even to him the question whether, what he proved to his own satisfaction to be impossible, may not perhaps exist.

I have watched the process of dying in more cases than I care to think about, but associated with each, we see stronger possibilities. Sickness, pain, and death, are no respecter of persons ; each must meet it alone, and for himself, nor will it admit of substitutes. All must alike succumb, and its mandates must be obeyed. The fond mother, wife, or sister, can do but little. "He is sinking," says the doctor, and as we have anticipated his previous wants, so would we like to care for him now, but he is going where we cannot follow, nor may we gaze into the mysteries of eternity. One thought fills our mind, the fact that he is going. But where?—the

question must remain unanswered. The nurse's work is over now, for the frail barque that has been driven by the wind, and lashed by the billows, is no longer visible—the helm has been taken by a higher hand.





CHAPTER XI.

PRIVATE NURSING.

IT may be interesting to my readers to hear how the time is spent by us when in the Home. We begin with breakfast at 9 a.m., then we have prayers. Each nurse is usually expected to make her own bed. In the morning, unless told to the contrary, we are free to go out until 1 p.m. In the afternoon and evening we are still left to our own resources, and usually spend the time in reading, games of whist, criticising the world generally, and I fear that I must add scandalizing our neighbours. We are liable to be called away at any minute. This is sometimes rather trying. In a game of whist, for instance, when it leaves only three players, and the game remains unfinished. The night garments are brought out and put to air, with the hope (and it is sometimes a faint one) that the night will be spent in bed, but often the hope is frustrated. A summons comes, there is a hasty packing, the sound of wheels, and the nurse is gone. Who will be the next? is the next thought. I sometimes think that to an on-looker it

must be rather amusing to watch the nurse's arrangements for the night. The hand is pointing to the specified hour (usually 10 o'clock) when we may retire to rest. The hope previously entertained of a night in bed becomes then almost a certainty. Yet as ours is essentially a life of uncertainty, sponge bags, combs and brushes, everything in use, is carefully put together, should (as we sometimes put it), "a case come in the night," or more correctly, should we be called up to go to one. We find that it is in the evening that so many of us go out, probably from the fact that as night approaches the patient is not so well, and the need of a nurse is felt. I should like to describe our feelings in the train, and the thoughts that force themselves upon us. I think they may be summed up thus: What kind of patient will she be? I wonder if the friends will be nice? Then often, unbidden, a feeling of forlornness creeps over one. A thing is never so much prized as at the time when we see it gradually receding from our view; and when sleep is farthest from our expectations, never in our life do we feel to need it so much. Hood sang "Oh bed! Oh bed! delicious bed, That heaven on earth to the weary head." Perhaps these lines more aptly describe our feelings while on our way.

But the journey is over, we are in the cab, and as it stops at the house, we look out eagerly to catch a view of it, and more eagerly still to notice the kind of people whom we shall meet. The fact of seeing so many gives us a wonderful insight into character. There is the stiff and haughty "lady of the house" who, with a slight inclination of the head, will motion you to a chair, taking care to occupy one a good distance from you. She states her reasons (or the doctor's) for sending for a nurse; she

will then seek to impress upon you the fact that she hopes you will be very kind to the patient, who has not been accustomed to roughness. These individuals we generally find soon thaw, and are often most amiable when the first fear of nurses is over, for they find that *even nurses can be kind*. Then, too, there is the gushing wife, mother, or sister, who begins by informing you that she knows what nurses are, having had them before ; she is "so glad that you have come." But in spite of these overtures of friendship we find that it is better (without the suspicion of a repulse) to be wary of all, until sufficient time has elapsed when we may discover whether they are *really* genuine. There is also another class who are much more troublesome to deal with, for they seldom consider an arrangement complete without them, and although perfectly natural that it should be so, it is none the less trying to the nurse. These people will seldom take a hint, and sometimes need politely to be asked to withdraw. They are full of questions, and greatly "wonder whether the doctor is treating the patient rightly." Each symptom is ferreted out, and not content with giving him the report downstairs they follow him up, and show great consideration for the exertions of the nurse by answering as many questions as possible addressed to her. We find that so long as they do not interfere with the recovery of the patient, it is better to leave them alone, reiterating the statement made by the husband of his wife, "It pleases her, and it does not hurt me." I may say that the happiness of a nurse is almost entirely in the hands of the family in whose house she is nursing. It is an acknowledged fact that our lives, filled as they are with change, must necessarily be very trying. To what extent this is so, is

patent only to ourselves. In private nursing we find that it is not the critical cases that are so trying, but those patients for whom little can be done. In short, those who, possessed of an active imagination, imagine that they are ill ; for these a nurse can do little. They call for no skill, for there is nothing upon which she can exercise it. The qualities that are essential to deal with them are the following : a large amount of patience and firmness, together with the exercise of gentleness and tact.

I must ask you to bear with me, whilst I try to explain. A few days ago I returned from my last patient, a gentleman suffering from an attack of rheumatic fever. He was a solicitor by profession, and an exceedingly good patient, at least for a *man*, for although we nurses give the preference to our male patients, we find that ladies, although having many more fads, are more patient. The family consisted of the parents, one son, and three daughters. In this house I was not only treated with great kindness, and consideration, but as one of the family, and it was with no joyous feeling that I anticipated my departure ; but the dreaded separation came at last, and it was with an aching heart, and many promises to come and see them again, that I departed. An aching heart ! But do nurses' hearts ever ache ? you ask. Yes, assuredly. The same hopes and fears, the same capability for loving are there ; we are in every sense human. I maintain that if nurses become callous and indifferent to the sufferings of others, it is not their profession that has made them so, but because they are so naturally.

It was on Wednesday that I returned to the Home, and having seen my luggage deposited in the box room,

I went in search of the secretary, who, I was told, had been enquiring for me. "I am glad that you have come," he said, "for we have another case for you; it is rather a long journey, so we would like you to catch the 8.5 train from Waterloo, and as I shall not be here so early, I will give you the letter with the rules to-night." I glanced at the envelope, and found it was directed to a lady of title. He then gave me the particulars, which were these: The lady to whom I was being sent was an invalid, and had a maid with her, who, having been trained, acted also as nurse. She was ill now, and needed rest; I was to supply her place while she was away. Now, although we are not in the habit of acting as maid alone, it sometimes happens that we are obliged to act in both capacities. In the present instance, the patient suffered purely from a nervous illness, and a maid she would not have considered sufficiently skilful. A night's rest, a hasty breakfast, and I was off. The book, for the first hour, remained in my hands unread, for my thoughts brooked control, and insisted on travelling back to the other house with its inmates that I had just left.

And this patient, how would she receive me? Three hours hence, and the question was answered, for having arrived at my destination, I was escorted to the morning room, where my future patient sat. How shall I describe her! (Let me be pitiful). She was a little woman, her height being not more than five feet, she was very stout, and had a florid face, on which sat an expression of peevish discontent. Ah! how my heart sank. But perhaps she would be nicer than she appeared.

"So you are the nurse," were her words of greeting.

“To think of having to be nursed by hired menials.” These words, I found, were directed not to me, but at the lady who was sitting with her, and acted as companion.

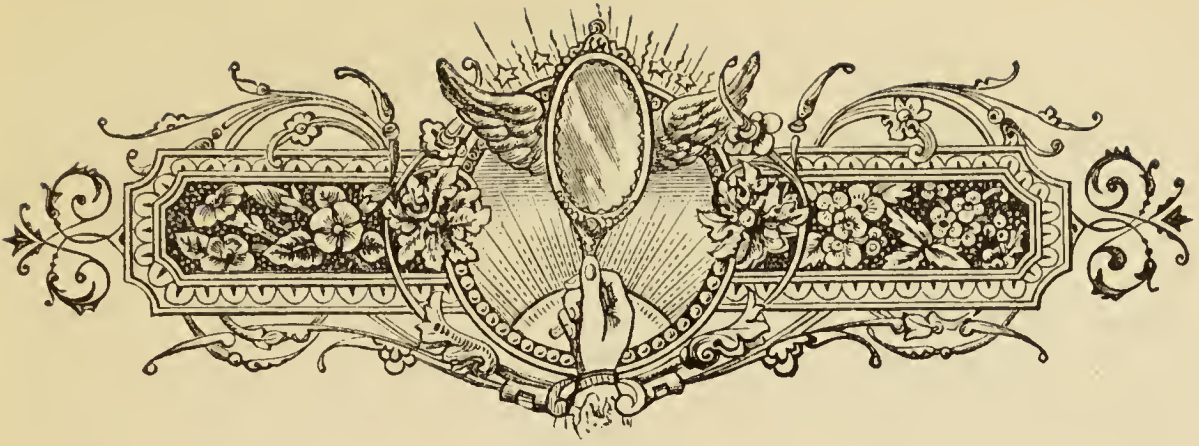
“I cannot hope,” I said, “to take the place of your maid, to whom you have no doubt become accustomed, but there are many things that I can do for you ; so I hope that you will not feel her loss very much.”

“I don’t like her !” burst from her lips (she liked nobody). “Are you strong ?” she asked, eyeing me as if I had been a weighing machine. I assured her that I was. “Then lift me up off this chair,” she demanded. “Quick ! I am not in the habit of being kept waiting ; quick ! or I’ll call my cook. If one servant does not satisfy me, I ring for another.”

It was evident that I lifted her to her satisfaction, for she continued to instruct me in reference to the other duties. “I shall expect you to sleep in my dressing room, as I need a good deal of attention during the night. My fire is allowed to go out when I retire to rest, but I wish it lighted at five o’clock each morning. My wardrobe will be your charge. You will not sit with me, but hold yourself in readiness, during the day, to my call. You will dress me each afternoon for my drive ; also I need a good deal of lifting. My nerves are in such a frightful state that I wish you to come to me in the night when you hear me move, in case I should wake. What would happen if I looked round and saw no one with me, I tremble to think. When I call you in the day it will usually be to lift me.” Now, the most wonderful part was that when she failed to remember she was an invalid, she could not

only lift herself up, but walk quite fast. But she very seldom did forget. After giving me these and other directions (too numerous to mention), she pointed to the door, remarking, "You can go. The servants' dinner is at 1.30; you will dine with them." Just a word here in reference to this arrangement. The nurses of to-day are usually taken from refined and educated women. Shall I say the governess class? Yet would they, I wonder, be asked to dine with the servants? I maintain that a nurse who does this puts herself on an equality with them, which is neither fair to herself or her patient, who will probably claim much of her society. Also, there is always a way out of it, if nurses will only be firm. I spoke to the housekeeper, who complied with my request at once, and allowed me to dine by myself. Perhaps the idea that cheers us most, in those trying cases, is the knowledge that we come only for a time.

Nursing has about it a strange fascination. We taste many of the sweets of life, and some of its bitters. At one time our hearts are full of gladness as we see in our patients the signs of returning vigour and life, but their recovery points to a speedy separation, and we go to fresh scenes, where maybe our tears soon mingle with those of a bereaved family. Few realise more than we how difficult it is to believe that above all, and in all these things that men call chance, there is a Divine Being Who not only *permits*, but directs and orders all.



CHAPTER XII.

THE SWEATING SYSTEM.



THE sweating system! Perhaps you had not thought of that as applying to nurses, for the term seems only to denote involuntary labour that has been pressed out by the exercise of the power that the strong have over the weak. Not that sweating is the rule—fortunately for us it is rather the exception—and we are treated with consideration, yet so entirely are we at the mercy of those in whose house we are nursing, that we are sometimes obliged to go through a course of sweating. There is nothing more likely to retard the recovery of a patient than the knowledge that there is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction between the friends and the nurse, and this fact helps us to bear many things without complaint. Rules are sent with us to each case, but these we often find completely ignored.

The nurse should be allowed at least seven hours sleep, and when possible one hour for exercise in the open air. “Seven hours for sleep! monstrous! why should *she* have so much when *we* take so little; and

exercise ! we never think of it." But consider : the strain for you will soon be over, and the time is not far distant when you, with your dear one restored to life again, may seek change and rest. For us the strain is never over, and we leave one scene of sickness and distress simply to enter another. A short time ago I went in answer to a telegram to nurse a little boy (the son of a clergyman). On my arrival the grandmamma came forward to meet me (or inspect me—we are usually inspected). "How is the little boy?" I asked. "He is very poorly," she returned, "but he is only one of your charges. First, there is Miss A— (Mr. B—'s sister) suffering from a very bad attack of asthma. She is trying all the new remedies, and you must never leave her longer than ten minutes ; her fire you will keep up both night and day. Then there is the little boy, who is in bed with a cold ; he is rather spoilt by us all (being the youngest), and would not go to bed without his mother, who seems to have caught cold through being in bed with him ; she is having poultices applied to the chest which must be continued. Then the other three children have whooping cough, and as the nursemaid has strained herself, you will attend to them all during the night, holding yourself in readiness to give them drinks, and to hold them up when they cough. The fires must be kept up both in the day and night nurseries. I am not at all strong myself, and am likely to be taken ill at any time ; I sent for you to give us all a rest. You can fill up the time by playing with the children in the day to relieve nurse."

My time, I could see, had been well marked out for me. The house was, in fact, a private hospital on a small scale, and I put my shoulder to the wheel to try to answer all the requirements.

It were well for us if we were (as many people suppose us) a kind of machine made to wind up and go to any length of time at will. But, alas ! we are but human, and, however willing we may be, we find that Nature asserts itself, and we become exhausted. In spite of the inconsideration shown by the lady whom I have mentioned, I felt very sorry for her, as she appeared to be as she said, "Not at all strong," and it must have been a strain, especially for her as she was elderly. I stayed up during the first day and night, the next day and the second night. At the end of that time I felt worn out with fatigue (for it was no ordinary case). Yes, it was not at all nice to be obliged to suggest rest for oneself, but sleep I must have, or I should be ill also, and no one seemed to think that *I* needed any. The suggestion of sleep for a *nurse* seemed to come to the poor old lady like a thunder-clap—the idea had not occurred to her—and there was no bed, as Mr. B—'s sister was occupying the spare bed room. "Could I sleep on the couch?" I felt that I could sleep anywhere, and need hardly say that I was *so* tired that I did not notice the difference.

On another occasion, when asking for time for rest, the reply came in a sharp, business-like tone, "I thought that you were trained?" "Yes," I replied, "none but those who are trained are sent out from our Institution." "Then why do you need rest? I thought that you were trained to do without it." And I found it difficult to convince her that this was not so. These instances (selected from many) will serve to accomplish one of the purposes for which this little book was intended: to give its readers an insight into the life of a nurse, her time, and how it is spent.



CHAPTER XIII.

FIRE IN A HOSPITAL.



HAVE heard of outbreaks of fire in theatres, prisons, workhouses, and at sea, but at no place can I conceive it more terrible than in a hospital. At sea, the poor sailors have often the choice of boats and rafts, whilst others can swim. In a theatre it must also be terrible, but its inmates come from choice, and seek pleasure. In workhouses death seems to be robbed of much of its bitterness, from the fact that it is often a refuge for the unfortunate who have tasted much of the bitterness and few of the sweets of life ; whilst to some death will be hailed with joy. The case of the prisoners has been taken to a higher court, and justice has been meted out with a severe hand. But the inmates of a hospital, made up as they are of sick and wounded bodies, unable, many of them, to stir hand or foot. The sight is too terrible.

Amongst the rules placed in all the male wards of our hospital, was the following : “ Smoking is not allowed by any inmate of this hospital, and any patient found

breaking the rules will render himself liable to instant dismissal." But it is evident, that even with those deprived of health and strength, the same craving for forbidden things remains. It is a remarkable fact that, amidst all the physical changes to which poor fallen humanity is heir, the mental characteristics remain unaltered. In spite of all our vigilance, burnt matches, ends of cigars, and recently used pipes, were frequently found by us in various quarters. But who was the culprit? One belonging to the family of nobody, doubtless, but he is often difficult to find. On one occasion I thought that I had found him, but he escaped me. On entering a ward, I saw issuing from a locker, by the side of one of the beds, wreaths of smoke, the scent of which proved to me that it was tobacco.

"You have been smoking," I said, speaking to the man occupying the bed next to it.

"No, Sister," he returned, innocently.

"But there is the smoke."

"It is only the dust from the mattress," he answered, reassuringly.

I reminded him that they had all been brushed the day before ; but I determined to watch, nevertheless, for tobacco smoke was injurious to many of the patients. There was no necessity, for we were destined to receive such a shock as we were not likely to forget.

It was a few days after the event narrated, that I, being left in charge of the west wing, was walking through the wards, when suddenly I detected the smell of fire, combined with tobacco smoke. Somebody has been smoking I thought. But this was no time for mere surmising. Quick ! silent action, this must be the order of the day. Yet there was no sign of fire in the

wards, and I had begun to think that it was a false alarm, when I saw issuing from one of the kitchen doors columns of smoke. It was the work of a moment to rush to the speaking tube, and make the fact known to the porters. Next, the buckets must be filled. It is in these moments that the need for self control is felt. I cannot describe my feelings, as there flashed before me—the sight of my patients, many of whom were quite helpless. Some of the convalescents, who were playing draughts, looked up in amazement as they saw the house-surgeons and porters walking through, armed with the fire apparatus. “It is only a bit of a flame,” said one, laughing, “but it may as well be put out, go on with your game.” And they, happily, not realising the extent of the mischief, continued to play. Meanwhile, with all our might, we stuck to the pumps, yet the fire seemed only to gain upon us. “Hold on, boys!” cried the hoarse voice of our senior surgeon, “we’ll have it out presently.” Once as the lurid glare lighted up the surrounding darkness, I caught sight of a dense crowd in the grounds beneath. It were well for the patients that that dark November night hid them from view. But presently there was a lull, and at length we had the satisfaction of knowing that the flames were extinguished. “The firemen are here, sir,” said a porter to one of the house-surgeons, who stood wiping the perspiration from his face. “You can bring them up, then,” was the reply, “although what would have happened had we waited for them.” I tremble to think. Yes, the fire was extinguished, and in its place was left a charred mass, the ward kitchen could scarcely be recognised. “Can you tell me how this happened?” asked the secretary. As I could give him no

information, we went into the wards to question the patients, who seemed to be happily unconscious of all that had taken place. The man who did it came forward at once, and told how "not meaning any harm, as there was no one in the kitchen, he had gone there to have a bit of a smoke, and to escape being found out, he had thrown the burnt match in the cupboard." This must have set light to the papers. "You must kindly forgive me, sir," said he, for he added, "it is awful hard on us chaps to be deprived of our baccy; I promise you that I'll never touch another pipe whilst I am in the hospital." The Dr. accepted his promise, and he was not dismissed, but such a lesson did it teach the others that it was long ere we were troubled with smoking again.





CHAPTER XIV.

PICTURES FROM LIFE.

BLACK OR WHITE.



NEW patient for the Female Medical Ward. That was the announcement, nor did the news cause excitement, for patients are frequently coming and going. It was rather the sight of the woman who followed. Was she black or white? that was the question. Appearances at first pointed to the former, but on closer inspection we discovered that she was a black woman, who had "once upon a time, long, long ago" (as the story books say) been white. Yes, "bath" was plainly written on her admission card, and in large letters, too. That was a comfort. Was ever woman scrubbed as much as she? Yet seemingly it was all without effect, for the dirt proved to be almost like the marking cotton, *in-grained*. We had a consultation over her, and decided that it would be better to put her in soak for the night. This we did, by rubbing her with oil, and covering her with a long flannel night-dress. In the morning we administered a second bath, which cer-

tainly made her complexion clearer. Yes! she must be a white woman. But she was a very unsatisfactory patient, at least so far as appearances were concerned. "This patient might have a bath," said the house-surgeon, as he came round the next morning. We told him that besides soaking her in oil we had given her two. "Then," said he, laughing, "I would suggest that she be scrubbed with a scrubbing brush and soda."

HEAVEN.

"Has you been to heaven, Sissie?" asked a little girl of five years, as she dried her eyes and tried to smile. "Sister hopes to go by-and-by, little one," I said. "Why do you ask?" "'Cause they said you'd been to mother's, and when I cried 'bout her dying, you said that she were in heaven. Has you been to see her?" It was a curious question, and the eager face of the questioner seemed to demand an answer. The day before had been "visiting day." I should like to take you to peep at the children then. All are on the tip-toe of expectation, and such wistful glances are directed towards the door, as each visitor enters. Little Annie was watching for her mother, and as time wore on, and no mother appeared, she began to cry. Presently I went up to the poor child and sat by her cot, remarking, "Will you have *me* for your visitor to-day, Annie?" Smiles and tears are so near at hand with children. Her face brightened as she called out to her companion in the next cot. "Ah! Sister's my visitor to-day." The visitors were just departing, when a woman arrived in a state of breathlessness, telling how she had been coming with the mother to the 'Orspital, when suddenly, without warning, she had dropped down dead. "Heart

disease the doctor said it were." Little Annie had overheard this conversation, and was heart-broken. We told her that "we hoped her mother was in heaven," and as I had been to the mother's house, she thought that I must have been to heaven.

DRINK THE SPOILER.

An accident! "A little girl will be brought in shortly," announced the doctor, and in less than five minutes preparations were made to receive her. Her stay with us, however, was to be but short, for on opening the bundle there appeared the bruised form of a little girl; her face and head was so much swollen and disfigured that the features could scarcely be identified. "Had the child been run over, you ask?" No; surely it were well had it happened thus. But it was done by her mother, when in a drunken rage. In a state of intoxication she returned home, to find her little girl seated on the doorstep with a neighbour's child. "Come in, you little warmint," she cried, "I'll learn you to get sittin' there when I goes out." The first thing that presented itself was the poker, and with it—(Ah! how can I tell it)—she felled her to the ground, one stroke after another followed, until her shrieks brought in a neighbour, scarcely less intoxicated. She was brought to us at once, but died soon after her admission. Ah, wretched woman! Where is the mother's love, of which we hear so much? Where the womanly tenderness and sympathy? Nay! ask me not, nor blame me—'tis the drink. I, too, was gentle—I too, have loved, loved as I thought none other could. 'Tis the drink, I see it now. But God, oh, God! help and pity the repentance of a remorseful woman.

THE SIGHTS THAT CHEER US.

“I am going home to-day,” said Maggie to Ralphie (the little boy occupying the next cot), “I am going home to day!” Maggie had been brought into the Hospital six months before, having been scalded very extensively. Her age was seven, and being the eldest of a large family, had been left at home, whilst her mother went to work, to take care of the baby. In making his bread and milk she had upset a kettle of boiling water over herself. For many hours we watched her anxiously. Would she recover? That was the question. “God grant she may!” sighed the mother. “A bonnie girl was our Maggie,” groaned the father; “I would give all I have to see her well again.” And their prayer was heard, for He to whom the fall of a sparrow is worthy of notice, had heard the sighs of the distressed parents, and to-day Maggie is going home. Ah, yes! That little scarred face, now radiant with smiles, tells its own sad tale, but the face, although disfigured, was a very happy one as she sat watching by the window for her mother to fetch her, assuring us again and again that she *must* come again and see us. Those nurses can see anything. “They have very little feeling left,” is often said of us, while others imagine that we take a morbid interest in the sight of suffering. On the contrary. It is the sight of those who have recovered that cheers and helps us to continue nursing. I maintain that, but for the large number of recoveries, there would be few nurses in the field to-day.

LOZENGES.

I had arrived at a fresh case, and the sister of the patient undertook to show me the things

for her use. *The things* usually consist of the linen drawer, caps drawer (if the patient wears caps), the sheets, dressing jackets, toilet arrangements, etc., and last, but not least, the medicines. The patient was suffering with a cold in the head, and it was for that reason she had sent to London for a "skilled nurse." "This is the medicine the doctor ordered, Sister ; then, besides that, she is going on with the lozenges that she takes usually." An enumeration followed. "These are the Long Life lozenges, she takes them when she feels faint ; the Peppermint lozenges she will ask you for when she wants them. Also the Pepsine and Morphia lozenges she takes at night ; Peppermint and Ginger both after lunch and dinner. The red Gum lozenges are for her throat ; her throat aches very much after much reading or talking. Then she has often a small cup of Bovril* before her morning tea, when she omits *Brand's* Essence. If she has *Brand's*, she takes two teaspoonfuls. These are Ipecacuanha lozenges ; she has not taken them very recently, but I daresay that she will begin them again on account of her cold. I think that that is all." A little, squeaky voice sounded from the bed, "You have forgotten the Pepsine powder." "The patient has one teaspoonful of this powder between bread and butter twice a day. That reminds me, she takes one tablespoonful of this medicine alternately with Franz Josef water every other night ; she derives great benefit from the water, for she suffers (as, I think, I told you) from chronic bronchitis. Now, I think that that really is all," said her sister. I began to fear that my new patient must be a kind of walking dispensary. I have

* The excellent preparation of Bovril may be had of all chemists, grocers, and stores, or direct from the proprietors, 30, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

administered lozenges of various kinds, but I certainly have never seen so many taken by one single patient before.

"THE ANGEL OF DEATH."

It is curious to notice the amount of superstition that is still entertained, even by the cultured and intellectual. I remember, some time ago, nursing an old lady who was so very ill that we entertained no hope of her recovery. Also, being both stout and paralyzed, she was very heavy. One of her friends sat up with me at night that she might help me to lift her. I had been with her exactly three weeks when, one morning (about 2.30), we heard a curious knocking. What could it be? There was no one at the door. We mentioned this fact the next morning to the other members of the family, who solemnly declared that it must have been the "Angel of Death." "Yes," said one of them, shaking her head and looking very wise, "I have heard that knocking for some time past!" Now, although we may laugh at these ideas in the daylight, they present quite a different aspect at night. Nor am I naturally timid, except, indeed, of things uncanny (I have never met with anything of the kind), yet I confess that during the next night I felt quite nervous. At length I found that I was obliged to go down into the kitchen to fetch something that had not been brought upstairs. But why this fear? A nurse ought never to be frightened. It was foolish in the extreme—so I reasoned with myself. Trying to be brave I marched boldly downstairs; presently, as I stood by the kitchen table, I heard the same sound as of some one knocking. I felt considerably startled as the noise continued, but, on looking up

I saw a little black and white face at the window ; it was pussy. In her endeavour to gain admission her paw caught on a piece of wood, which, in its turn, knocked the window.

THE SHADY SIDE.

Much has been said regarding the usefulness of nurses, yet at times few women realise more than we the extent of our utter helplessness. This is never more experienced than by the bedside of the dying, for their feet are often slipping from one foundation with little hope of another. "Oh ! for life," they cry ; and how gladly would we stretch out our hands to help them. No sacrifice would be too great ; but even as children drown before the eyes of their parents, so we helplessly watch these poor bodies, until their spirits sink into eternity.

All sorts and conditions are represented there—the husband, the father, the mother, the man of business, the man of wealth—all must alike succumb, for death is no respecter of persons. There may often be seen the young, the manly, and the intellectual, on the very verge of the tomb, many of them never having been instructed in religious principles other than as a matter of speculative philosophy—a system devised by man to rule the multitude. Look for the elegant rooms, costly furniture, valuable paintings, beautiful gardens, and shrubberies, and you will sometimes find them, but they often speak only of the rank and riches of the possessor. Yet rank is not happiness ; look, search earnestly for it, and you will often look in vain. The one thing needful, the pearl of greatest price, without which all else is worthless, is absent.

HUMANITY.

Will our lives ever be less anxious, less fraught with the great issues which go to make up that great whole which men call life? Yet it is not the anxiety, not the watching that tries us, it is rather the ingratitude and inconsideration with which we are regarded. Night and day I watched him. "It was the skill combined with the constant care," the Doctor said, "that saved him." Yet was that life worth so little? Nay, for many regarded it as dear. "How can we ever repay you?" was the question asked. We seek no reward, we would only taste the satisfaction experienced by those who do their duty. We ask neither for luxury nor ease; we would simply live. Sickness may visit you again, the same institution may then supply your need; yet they must be supported. It was curious to notice the terrified expression on the face of my patient when the account was rendered. "Two guineas a week," cried he, in astonishment; "for the services of a nurse, one guinea amply pays for all." Ah! where is now the gratitude of which you spoke? Gone! It took to wing even with the danger, yet, let us not judge harshly, for mankind is after all, but dust. Life is said to be made up of disappointment, and there is not a day when we do not realise this. The battle of life is great, and the strife waxes fierce, yet we love to linger and to trust, but too often 'tis to find that our idol is but made of clay, and we wake up from sleep to acknowledge that the being whom we called great, is but earth in an earthly vessel. Yet hope sweet hope, supports us in it all, and our trust although shaken, is not destroyed, for it leaves one object simply to seek another.

A PEEP BEHIND THE SCENES.

Many of the accidents admitted are caused directly, or indirectly, through drink. In the night especially so many of the patients brought in are inebriated. The night following a holiday is quite a harvest for such cases. We usually reserve as many beds as possible for the purpose. A bad scalp wound, a fractured arm, or leg, is often the worst feature. How they escape with so little is the mystery. The garb of these pleasure-seekers is often rather amusing. A most gaudily dressed lady will be carried in, her silk skirts draggled in the mud. Remove her dress, and her finery has departed, for there is little else but rags beneath that outside covering. The men often appear in quite an intoxicated state, with the blue ribbon pinned to their coats. Ah, poor, foolish inebriate! could you but see the scorn and contempt with which even your fellow-patients regard you, you would at least seek to save yourself from it.

SATISFACTION.

“I am so hungry, Sister, and, oh, this thirst!” he cried. “The tea bell will ring presently,” I said, trying to comfort him. “But it does me no good, I am always just as hungry after it; shall I never be satisfied?” he asked. “Were you ever very hungry, was your mouth ever parched with thirst? If it has been you will know how I always feel, and all I take makes no difference,” said the sick man. The speaker’s age was thirty-five, his figure was tall and gaunt, his face long and thin, whilst his hollow eyes seemed to look out hungrily on all around him. He was one of our medical patients, and suffered from

that fearful disease, "Diabetes," and he was in an advanced stage of it. Just before the final arrangements for the night we read a short chapter and a prayer. The chapter appointed for this evening was the 7th of Revelation, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." Ah! what a long drawn sigh came from the direction of his bed. In the morning the night nurse reported his death to me, remarking, "just before he died, he smiled so brightly, and tried to say something. I could only hear the words 'hunger no more.'" Ah, yes! the poor man had at last found satisfaction. For in our Father's house they "hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither do the sun light on them, nor any heat."





CHAPTER XV.

PICTURES FROM PRIVATE LIFE.

“**T**HERE are several things about which I must speak before this operation,” said my patient. “It is quite possible that I may not get better, and I should like to feel that I had arranged everything” (some arrangement of importance, I thought). “First, there are the kittens; I must reduce my expenditure as much as possible. I feel sure that cook takes almost daily one pennyworth of milk extra for them, which comes to exactly sevenpence per week. I have thought the matter well over,” she continued, “and have decided that when the cats’-meat man comes they must be drowned. I will pay him for doing it,” she said, opening her purse and handing me out a penny. “There are five, are there not?” “Yes.” “Then give him that penny.” “Will you not save one to comfort the mother?” I asked. “I cannot afford it. Then there is another thing of which I wish to speak to you—my handkerchiefs—I make it a rule never to use more than *one* during each week, and I have noticed that you use

several ; I must confine you to one. I tell you this now as I may be too ill to do so later on. The laundress charges a halfpenny for each handkerchief, a halfpenny for each one," she repeated, sorrowfully. The surgeons soon arrived, and just before her removal to the operating table, I gave her a clean handkerchief. "This is Thursday," she said, "when did I have the other one clean?" "On Monday," I answered. "Then it must last until Monday." But she was soon under the influence of ether, and not until she was unconscious could I remove the soiled handkerchief.

Surely we are curious mortals, and the issues of life and death are mixed with strange trivialities.

A KISS.

We sat watching by his bedside, listening to the laboured breathing of the sleeper. Ah ! how wan and thin he looked, how sharpened were his features with long illness and pain. "Only twenty-nine," said his wife, sorrowfully, "our first baby too, and he does love it. To-morrow will be the second anniversary of our wedding-day. This time last year we were so happy, and he, poor fellow, was devising a way of spending the day, and now the doctor says he can't get better. It is *too* terrible." Presently the patient moved, and I bent near to catch the half-articulated request. "More air," he cried, "how dark it is, so dark, dear wife, that I cannot see you ; and Sister, where is Sister?" "I am here," I said, moistening his lips, for he had ceased to swallow. "Tis hard to die and leave my little wife and baby. Kiss me, dear love. And you, Sister, kiss me ; 'tis but the request of a dying man." "Do kiss him,"

said his wife, and I drew near and kissed his cold, damp forehead.

* * * *

Four hours elapsed, and the doctor again appeared. "He is decidedly a little better, and there is a slight change. It is possible," he said, drawing me aside, "that he may recover." And he did. Slowly, but surely, we saw in him the signs of returning vigour and life. Six weeks later I left him convalescent. "Well, Nellie," he said, turning to his wife with a merry twinkle in his eyes, the day before I left him, "Sister did kiss me once, and I thought it so sweet that I determined to live and have another, and here she refuses to give it me ; I think that I deserve one." I left it an open question, for he certainly never had a second.

IN TIME.

The sunlight streamed in at the window and displayed the delicately chiselled features of a girl of eleven. Her long curls were damp and dishevelled now, for she had just awakened from a long and troubled sleep. Her fair cheek was flushed, and her eyes unnaturally bright, as she turned from side to side and moaned as if in pain. I stood by her bedside trying, sometimes vainly, to soothe her in her delirium, and at others to cool her feverishness by applying ice-bags to her head. The afternoon was hot, and a death-like stillness seemed to pervade the whole house ; presently a figure noiselessly entered the room, it was the mother of the child. She motioned me towards her, and remarked coldly, and in a whisper, "I don't think that Eva will get better." "The doctor still entertains the hope that she may," I

said. "Oh! well," she returned, "let us hope that she will, but I have sent for a woman from the village that she may be in the house and ready to help you with her after her death. I will bring her in." The woman, entering, looked at the child, and in a business-like way began feeling the mattress, remarking as she did so, "I want to see whether we shall need a board to put under it as it is a soft one, and they dies awful limp sometimes." I at once came to the rescue, suggesting that any further discussion should take place downstairs.

I have often thought of that mother, and wondered how she could be so cold. Nor did the fact of the child's recovery move her to any expression of pleasure or surprise, for she simply remarked, "I have given away her clothes, as I thought it impossible for her to get better. I will have some new ones made that they may be ready for her use when she gets up." The world is certainly made up of strange characters, and we nurses meet with a great variety.

ECONOMY.

One of the lessons to be learnt in private nursing is economy. I will describe what I saw in one house in which I was nursing. The patient was an old lady, and had had a small operation performed. Her income was considerable, yet she had a great dislike for spending it. Thinking that our menu will be interesting I will give it.

For breakfast we had eggs (twenty a 1/-). Some of them were indifferent, but no matter, we managed to get a good one occasionally. We dined at mid-day; this meal often consisted of sheep's head, which was served with brain sauce. The price of this dish was

8d. Also the soup was saved and served for dinner during the two succeeding days. For tea we had bread and butter, with the occasional luxury of a little jam ; this had water stirred into it just before its arrival at table, which, although it did not improve its flavour, may have saved us a bilious attack, and thus prevented a doctor's bill. Supper was allowed occasionally for those who could take it, and consisted of gruel made with water, and this, like the other items, was inexpensive. On one occasion, I was going out to meet some friends. "Do stay to dinner," said my patient, "we have a most delicious one to-day." A very savoury odour pervaded the house, and feeling hungry, I decided to do so. Presently a gong sounded, and we were seated round the table. The dish covers were removed, and revealed—what? A single pigeon, and one tiny cauliflower. This was dinner for three. I had a part of the breast and one tiny bud with a leaf of the cauliflower. I have omitted to mention the sauce ; yes, we had bread sauce. We talked a great deal but ate little, for there was little to eat. "How are you getting on, Sister?" asked the hostess, politely. "Very well, thank you, Mrs. R——." "Take a little more bread sauce." I thought that there might be the addition of a pudding, but when our hostess rose and returned thanks I knew that it was a forlorn hope indeed. Nor must I forget the dinner party, for the hint to those who entertain much may be valuable. Yes ! we were really going to have some friends to dinner ; five were invited. I watched the preparations with keen interest and curiosity. A jelly was provided, a tipsy cake, some vegetable soup, and a tiny chicken. The two first items were served sparingly, and more than half was left. At the end of a fort-

night I began to fear that we were getting quite gay, for a second party was invited, but the tipsy cake was mouldy, yet no matter; the mouldy parts were removed, the cake was cut up small, and fresh custard poured over it. The jelly was mouldy also, but it could be managed much more easily, for it was *washed*, boiled down, put into a mould, and served up again. Will my readers find it difficult to imagine that after both dinner parties had been given there was still sufficient cake and jelly left for our second course at dinner next day?





CHAPTER XVI.

SHALL I BECOME A NURSE?



AND now a word to those who think of entering the profession. To all I would say, Be perfectly sure that nursing is your vocation, and having settled this most important point, the next subject in question is the choice of a hospital. I have nursed both in provincial and London hospitals, and prefer the former. In a good provincial hospital you will not only have the benefit of lectures but the practical part of nursing in every sense of the word. Theory is well in its way, but when combined with practice it is invaluable. A provincial hospital has, unfortunately, its drawbacks, one of the principal being that the matrons of to-day are usually taken from those nurses who have been trained at a London hospital, and there qualified for and acted as Sister. Much depends in a name. The London hospitals have one, and will keep it. Yet I would like to impress upon you that the fact of your being a good or bad nurse will not depend so much on the place of your training as upon yourself. If you have in you the mak-

ings of a good nurse, and apply yourself, you will be a good one wherever trained.

We will suppose, however, that the choice of a hospital has been made, and you are duly installed and acting as probationer. The road to success is often a rugged one, and nursing is no exception. You will frequently be placed in trying circumstances, meeting with much discouragement. You, who hitherto thought that you knew much, will find that you know little, and will feel inclined to acknowledge yourself quite a child again; and it is better that it should be so, if it make you anxious to learn, and willing to be taught. I remember, some years ago, reading a short tale in an old lesson book, called "Eyes and no eyes, or the art of seeing." It gave a graphic description of two boys, each having the same opportunity, visiting a place at the same time. One returned full of knowledge, whilst the other had seen nothing. It is just so in the nursing world. Whilst willingly admitting that you know nothing, you must, as I heard an old nurse express it, "Keep your eyes in your head," in other words, do your own little part well and use your eyes intelligently. A much-worried nurse was one day complaining to me of the stupidity of her new probationer. I ventured to remark that "everything was new to her." "That is just it," she answered, "I can teach her nothing. To anything I tell her she says 'I know,' and there is nothing that irritates me more." If you, dear reader, do happen to know many things that are taught you, I advise you to keep the fact to yourself. Remember, that on your arrival at a hospital you are expected to know nothing. The subject in question may be explained differently, at any rate a second telling can do

no harm, and will help to impress it upon your memory. You will probably receive many snubbings from those who, although superior to you in knowledge, are your inferiors socially. On no account allow the latter fact to have weight with you. If you are of noble birth let it only be seen by that true nobility of character which leaves on the actions an indefinable, yet unmistakable, mark. Few are more ready to acknowledge the superiority of a lady than nurses themselves, yet the idea of your making the fact patent will cause you to be looked down upon with dislike and contempt, and the memory of this (to them) grave offence will take years to obliterate.

Some time ago I had a three months' old probationer brought to me by the matron, who remarked of her, "I fear that she has not received justice at the hands of those with whom I placed her; she has nursed with two nurses who have both reported her to me, and as this is her last trial I bring her to you that you may see what you can do with her." The day on which she came to me was a particularly busy one, and we had but little time for talking, but she seemed very willing and worked well. I frequently found myself wondering why the nurses had taken a dislike to her? She explained the mystery herself the next day by remarking, "The nurses do not appreciate me; they forget that I am a lady." A lady! Yes, all was summed up in that one word. They had disliked her, not from the fact of her being a lady, but because she had tried to impress them with an idea of her own importance. I tried to explain the true state of things to her, which she was quick to see. I never had a more helpful probationer, nor one for whom I felt more regret as the time drew near for us

to part. She is now an excellent nurse, and is much loved by her fellow-nurses, yet she acknowledges that she learnt her lesson by bitter experience. If you are a lady, so much the better ; if a talented one, better still. Bring with you the choicest gifts with which it is possible for nature to endow you. You cannot bring with you too much. The nursing world is worthy of all, and all may be turned to good account. Will it surprise you to hear that you may meet with nurses who will take a mean advantage of your inexperience by giving you an extra share of work to do? It happened to me once. I complained to the matron, who righted the wrong, but in its place, for a time, I had fastened to me the name of " tale bearer," which was a greater trouble than the first. Whilst always taking a stand for the right, I would advise you to have as few disputes as possible ; yes, even with those who would try to do you an injustice. The right always asserts itself in the end. Let your motto be " Excelsior." Be not content with half measures, and with the exercise of patience you will surmount all difficulties.





CHAPTER XVII.

THE NATIONAL PENSION FUND FOR NURSES— ITS WORTH.



WITH reference to our hours on duty, in a hospital, they are usually from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m., with an interval of two hours for recreation. During this time our anxiety is constant and the strain is great, surrounded as we are by the most harrowing pictures of humanity.

Our periods of leave, I think, may be reckoned thus: fourteen days annually, and forty-two hours out of each month. In private nursing, both our work and rest is uncertain. Our rules entitle us to seven hours for sleep, with an interval of one hour out of each twenty-four for recreation in the open air, which leaves a margin of sixteen hours "on duty." During the convalescence of our patients the work is easier, and our hours few in comparison. It will be apparent that there is often illness amongst us. The question, then, is not so much where to go when ill, as to whom to go when convalescent (for some nurses have few friends). There are numbers of "Convalescent and Holiday Homes," yet we

do not often avail ourselves of their benefits. Nurses are not unlike soldiers, for we are literally surrounded by rules and regulations, and in going away for a holiday, or a change after illness, we find that an entire rest, with perfect freedom from all that savours of institutions or institution life, does us more good than anything. But how is this to be accomplished? for a nurse considers herself well paid if she receives £30 per annum for her services. Some well-meaning people have suggested founding a convalescent home for us. We appreciate the kindly thoughts that prompted it, but think that they could help us far more by amalgamating with the Pension Fund.

There is nothing which so much weakens both mind and body as anxiety, there is nothing which so hinders our powers of work, and those of us who have joined the Pension Fund can find rest in the knowledge that our future is provided for. To those who know little of the Fund, I cannot do better than quote the particulars from the *Hospital* of July 12th, 1890:—

“It is often said and believed that wealth is the surest winner in the race for public honours. Cynicism finds its pleasure, such as it is, in following this line of thought and in compelling attention to it. But in this country, and no doubt universally, there are ways to honour which do not pass through the avenues of wealth. Those five or six hundred nurses who were welcomed and smiled upon by the Princess of Wales at Marlborough House, on Friday week, were probably as poorly endowed with worldly goods as any five or six hundred respectable women could well be. Yet one of the noblest princesses of her time, and the sweetest woman, made those nurses free of her generous hospitality and received them as a sister would. The sight was more than pleasing. It was better than ‘in the brave days of old, when the rich man helped the poor man, and the poor man loved the great.’ It was better, because the nurses

were not there to receive the alms or the bounty of the princess, but to be encouraged and stimulated along the honourable pathway of self-help.

“Nurses have for some time received a larger share of public attention than any other women of their own class. Is this a purely artificial state of things? Or is there something about nurses, distinguishing them from other women, which will maintain them at their present elevation in public regard? A critical spectator at the Merchant Taylors’ gathering and at Marlborough House, could not but be conscious of certain peculiarities about the nurses which were sufficiently marked to differentiate them from all other women of their own age and condition in life. Two characteristics were plainly distinguishable: discipline, and readiness of resource. The very way in which their uniforms were worn showed training; and the promptitude with which they fell into order and line proved how thoroughly experienced they were in the art of quick and intelligent obedience. It is plain that the three or four years of hospital life which most nurses have to pass through, do not merely make nursing experts of them, but give them general culture of a very valuable kind. Many a nurse who has had poor opportunities of school education before commencing her training, leaves the hospital with a cultivated mind and with practical intelligence much above the average of her sex. All this, and more, was clearly evident to the sympathising spectator at Merchant Taylors’ Hall and at Marlborough House.

“The just man likes to see every person receive his due. In a sense, nurses receive their due, and sometimes perhaps a little more; but in other particulars they receive very much less. Wages ranging between twenty and thirty-five pounds a year cannot be said to be adequate pay for well-trained nurses, even though supplemented by one or two uniforms. At the same time, the supply of candidates for nursing appointments is so abundant that it would be futile to expect any considerable increase of pay. It speaks well for the sense of justice that dominates our fellow-countrymen that they are so universally anxious to make amends to nurses in other ways. The National Pension Fund had its origin in a sense of justice. ‘A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind;’ and to a hospital worker, who has known by stern experience the limited opportunities of hospital officials,

was due the inception of what has since become a great and widespread popular movement. But the Pension Fund could have no chance of permanent existence and growth if it had not found itself planted in a soil prepared for it. For a quarter of a century the public and the medical profession have been finding out the incalculable value of trained nurses. There is ample evidence to show that the starting of the Pension Fund came as a positive relief to the minds of many persons whose lives have been saved or their health restored mainly through the agency of sick nurses. To those persons an opportunity was offered for the first time of doing something practical to show their appreciation and gratitude. The fact that a Bonus Fund of £40,000 has been raised within three years, and that largely by the efforts of one individual, is proof positive of the firm hold that nurses have taken upon the regard and affection of those whom they have served. When to this material reward there is added the warm recognition of their services and the public espousal of their cause by those who are so near the throne of this realm as their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, the nurses cannot but feel that there is a sincere desire among all ranks to prove to them how grateful a British public can be.

“The Princess of Wales put the top-stone and crown upon what has been a very arduous undertaking. The National Pension Fund for Nurses was, at its commencement, the breaking of entirely new ground. No such association had ever been created before ; and there was consequently neither experience to guide nor example to warn of possible danger. Entirely satisfactory, not to say triumphant, as were the proceedings at Marlborough House on Friday week, they were no index of the arduous labours, the deep anxieties, and the alternate hopes and disappointments of three strenuous and fighting years. At the outset the nurses were drawn in different directions by critics who had no just grounds for their opposition, and who made up for the want of justice in their cause by the unscrupulousness in its maintenance. Of course those who knew anything whatever about the nature of the business in hand understood quite well the real cause of the opposition. But nurses did not and could not be expected to understand it. At one time it seemed possible that the £20,000 of the four city merchants would actually

be flung back in their faces as a despised and worthless gift. But inexperienced as the majority of the nurses were in the ways and arts of disappointed and defeated persons, they had practical good sense enough to know that men who were willing to give £20,000 for their benefit were at least as likely to be their friends as those who had nothing to give them, and were only anxious to take something from them if possible.

“But the fighting days are over, and the National Pension Fund for Nurses is now, as the Prince of Wales said, in the fullest sense of the word, a permanent ‘national’ institution. His Royal Highness briefly sketched the history of the Fund from the date of its birth to the present time. He announced that nurses had themselves collected a sum of £2,200 to found a Junius S. Morgan Benevolent Fund. He paid a passing tribute to the memory of Mr. Morgan, who, he said, had been the generous donor of £10,000. He commended specially those nurses who had, unaided, joined the Fund to the number of several hundreds, and stated that a sum of £5,000 had been set apart by the managers for the special purpose of the augmentation of their pensions. He expressed the conviction that the Pension Fund was the very kind of thing that nurses needed, and that all nurses of every class should hasten to avail themselves of its advantages.

“As warmly as the Prince of Wales spoke Mr. Walter Burns, of the work that had been done by Mr. Morgan and the other City merchants, and of the work that Mr. Morgan’s family yet intended to do. ‘Nothing succeeds like success,’ and the Pension Fund has been successful beyond the most sanguine hopes of its founders. Whilst, however, it is impossible for the Fund to fail, it is quite possible for many nurses to fail in securing its benefits. No fund can help those who will not make an effort to help themselves. We have reason to know that the managers are anxious to meet halfway those who can do the very least in their own behalf, provided they will make some sort of attempt to do that least. Those who sit still and will not so much as write a letter of inquiry must not be surprised when old age comes if they find their sister nurses in plenty and themselves in poverty. In this world, it is true, that to her that hath shall be given, and she shall have abundance, whilst from her that hath not and maketh no effort to gain, shall be taken away even that which she seemeth to have.”



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PRELIMINARIES OF HOSPITAL WORK.



MUCH has been said in reference to the deteriorating effect that nursing has upon the mind of the nurse herself. This idea is wholly unfounded, for "to the pure all things are pure." I do not hesitate to say that nursing, if not the highest, is one of the highest and noblest works on earth. It calls forth hourly both love and sympathy on behalf of the sufferer. A profession that calls forth these virtues cannot deteriorate, rather does it raise the mind to heights which would otherwise be left unattained.

I have frequently been asked how it is that so many girls who enter the profession leave soon after joining. The reason, I think, is this, in the idea one forms of hospital life sentiment has a very large place. On arriving at the field of labour we find much room, but little time, for sentiment. Also, the thought of nursing is seldom coupled with the cleaning of brasses, scrubbing, dusting, &c. In the former category are included the cleaning of inkstands, knobs of bedsteads, door

handles, dressing tins, and the ward instruments. In the latter the scrubbing of chairs, window sills, and the patients' lockers, "both inside and out." (I scrubbed inside the lockers, but omitted the outside until called back to do them again.) Also the dusting and preparation of the wards, consulting room, &c., &c.

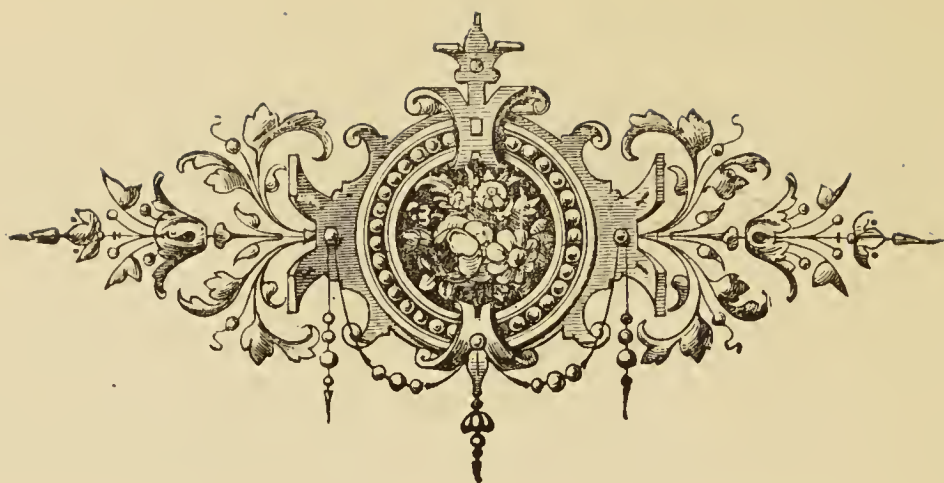
If the ward happens to be a particularly busy one at the time of the arrival of the new probationer, she seldom receives the patience due to one who is quite fresh to the work by the tired and often overworked nurse, who finds, instead of the six months' old probationer, who has begun to be a real help to her, she has a new one who has everything to learn. How often have I heard the remark, "A new probationer; what a nuisance. I expect I shall be obliged to have her. New ones always get pushed off on to *me*." If we, who are trained, could once for all realise that we were once quite new to the work, having everything to learn, we should, perhaps, have more patience with the new probationer. New and sad sights present themselves to her on every hand. Then, too, the suggestion will force itself in, that cleaning pots and pans cannot surely come under the head of nursing. The dream dreamt ever so often and ever so fondly of the shaking of the pillow is left unrealised, and the would-be nurse returns home sick at heart. On the other hand, had a little more patience been exercised, had that big person self been left more completely out of the question, all might have terminated happily, for as one of our poets tells us, "They truly serve who only stand and wait."

In hospital work, as in all others, we find that they who do the small things perfectly, will do greater things well also. A girl who cleans dressing tins badly will,

when she is trusted with the more serious work of dressing the patient's wounds, dress them in a slovenly fashion, and thus deprive him of his one chance of recovery.

It will be seen from these few remarks that after all, the preliminaries of nursing are but tests used before proceeding to the more serious work of nursing itself.





CHAPTER XIX.

THE ESSENTIALS OF NURSING.



ANY nurses are added to our number. Some say that we are becoming too numerous, but in nursing, as in everything else, there is always "room at the top." Good nurses are needed still ; and whilst again reminding you that you cannot be too highly gifted, nor bring with you too much—that culture, talent, everything, may be utilised in the profession you have chosen—yet in the absence of many of these things the invitation still sounds forth, for you still may help to stem the tide of human suffering, and with loving sympathy, shed rays of sunshine on those around you. There are essentials, however, in the absence of which it were better for you to remain where you are. Truth, sympathy and sincerity, without these virtues you will bring trouble both on yourself and others ; with them, what may you not accomplish ?

In nursing it is *fact*, not *fiction*, with which we

have to deal. Reality is stamped on every detail of it. Sickness, pain and death are indeed stern realities, and there must be no trifling with them. At the bedside of the sick, the curtain is drawn aside; we see no longer suffering hidden with the masque of etiquette. All is changed there, and we have before us only the poor distressed patient, needing all our care, all our love, and drawing from us all the sympathy of which we are capable. What if we are capable of little of either?

A late patient in referring to a former nurse, remarked, "I cannot say that she was not a good nurse. If goodness consists in doing one's duty, she was *excellent*; she knew her duty, and did it well, but she went no further. There was an indescribable deficiency in her. A something for which I unconsciously looked without finding it. My illness, you see, had made me so sensitive, for soon I discovered that it was sympathy she lacked. I longed for a kindly word and smile, but saw only the face of stoical indifference. I shall never forget that sad, sad time. A little sympathy would have made all the difference."

If you are a true woman you will be a true nurse, and a sympathetic, kindly nature is of far greater value than pure gold. Also, I would remind you, that it will often be upon your word entirely that the doctor will depend. Is there a symptom for which you have failed to look? Then be brave and tell him so candidly. Better appear really ignorant than mislead him in reference to your patient. The greatest self-sacrifice may often be found in the simple

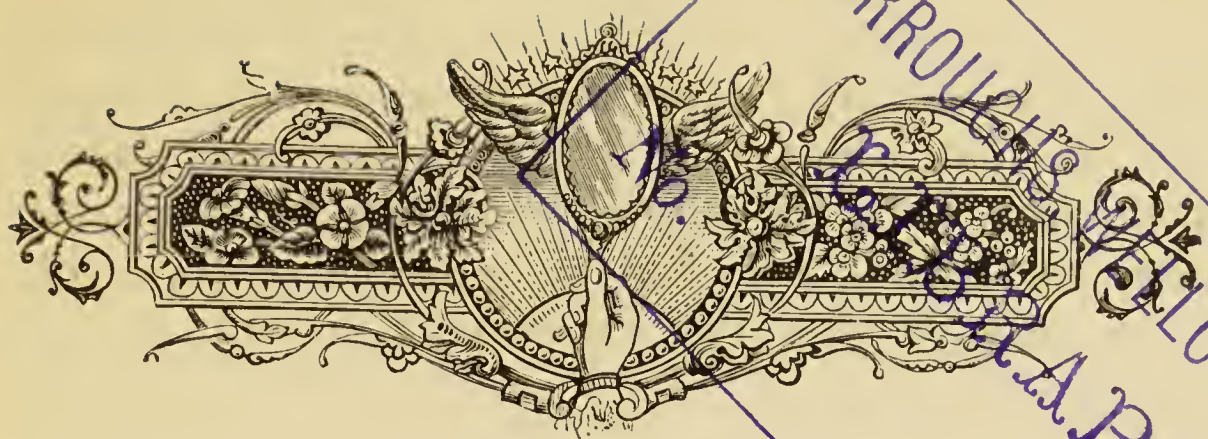
path of duty. Surely this is one means of doing it, and one which will bring with it the sense (if not the triumph of the victor) of the satisfaction always experienced by those who honestly try to do their duty.

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CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

HOSPITAL OR PRIVATE NURSING.

THE difference in the qualities essential to make a good nurse vary in reference to the uses to which they are to be put; thus it does not follow that a good hospital nurse will succeed in private nursing, and a bad one will certainly fail. One of the essentials in hospital nursing is organisation. A nurse must be able to make suitable rules, and, with firmness, put them in force. I may say that on this one quality will depend both the comfort and well-being of her patients. On the other hand, a private nurse requires a large amount of tact, for whilst in a hospital she deals with *real* suffering; amongst her private patients she finds that their greater culture and refinements tend to promote many nervous ailments, and these fancies, although not to be encouraged, need the same careful dealing with as if they really existed. A bright, cheery face and reassuring manner will go far to dispel them. In a hospital the hours on duty are usually twelve, whilst in a private house they are sometimes as many as

eighteen or twenty. This may be accounted for from the fact that, whilst in a hospital, there are trained nurses who come on duty in succession ; in a private house the friends are often quite unable to cope with the disease, so that the nurse stays on duty in the interest of her patient.

I find that one of the most trying features in private nursing is its uncertainty, and at our busiest times (usually spring and winter) we go quite quickly from one case to another. We have left our patient well, maybe, and on our arrival at the Nursing Institution, finding that there are already several nurses at home, we arrange to meet a friend, yet we are always prepared for the disappointment that so often comes, for we can make sure of nothing. Christmas and other festive seasons come round, more often than not, to find us watching by the sick and dying.

A nurse must essentially be the friend and servant of the public. She knows little rejoicing, save in her work ; yet nursing is so stimulating and full of the suppressed excitement caused by constant contact with the great issues of life and death, that it occupies her whole mind, and deprives her of the power to enjoy the simple pleasures of life until, alas ! she becomes a woman of one idea. Whilst in a hospital, the nurses who become ill in the discharge of their duty, receive every care ; a private nurse receives so little that at last she ceases to expect any. The nurse is tired. "Impossible," say the patient's friends, "for is she not a nurse ? and has she not been wound up to go a certain length of time ?" Her appetite is poor. "Absurd in the extreme, for is she not a nurse ?" Strained herself in lifting. "Curious thing for a nurse to do, but she must

go as soon as we are suited with another." But where *is* she to go? "Ah! that is her own concern."

I remember a friend of mine nursing a patient suffering with diphtheria, who gave him unremitting attention, and, when he became convalescent, succumbed to the disease herself. But she was a nurse, so it mattered little. She was put into a cab and driven to the station, to find her way back to the Home quite by herself. She managed the short railway journey, and on her arrival at the other end of it, was just able to give her address to an outside porter, asking him to drive back with her to see that she was all-right.

We hear much of the heartlessness of nurses, but is this an instance of the kindness of the public? Experience teaches me that whilst we are expected to give much, we receive little. Let us use every effort, let us strain every nerve, we have but done our duty. Our services are so seldom appreciated that we cease to expect that they will be. A nurse must be prepared to adapt herself to her surroundings. Above all things she *must* have a heart—a heart capable of feeling for others, of weeping with those who weep, making merry with those who are glad.

To any nurse who thinks of taking up private nursing I would say that, although your work in the hospital may have been very hard, yet you receive many advantages there that, as a private nurse, you will miss. Much self-denial will be required. Great demands will be made upon you—come prepared to meet them. The fact of our work being hard is well-known, to what extent this is so, is patent only to ourselves; but we are but human, and a little more consideration would make our lives much easier. I was much amused the

other day by the remark of a friend, who said, "Never mind, nurses and doctors will have a long rest in heaven." "Why nurses and doctors?" I asked. "Because it says that there will be no sickness there." So fascinating is nursing that I must say that an eternal holiday could have but little attraction.

And now, lest I weary my readers, I bring this little book to a close. Much I could have said that might have lent to it greater attraction, but in the interest of all, I have suppressed all those facts likely to shock the sensitive. Yet I cannot close without offering a last appeal on behalf of nurses generally. Remember that, although nurses, we are women still, and void neither of sympathy or feeling. Our work is anxious, responsible, and solitary; we have long hours of work, and short hours of relaxation; we rest when others sleep, and live in a world of our own. Being seldom understood, our actions are often misconstrued, yet, in the greatness of your hearts be disinclined to doubt us, and, in the multitude of your other thoughts, spare one kindly thought for us.

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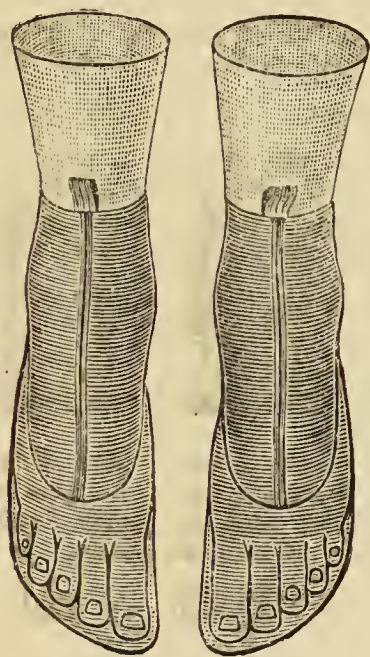


FIG. 1.

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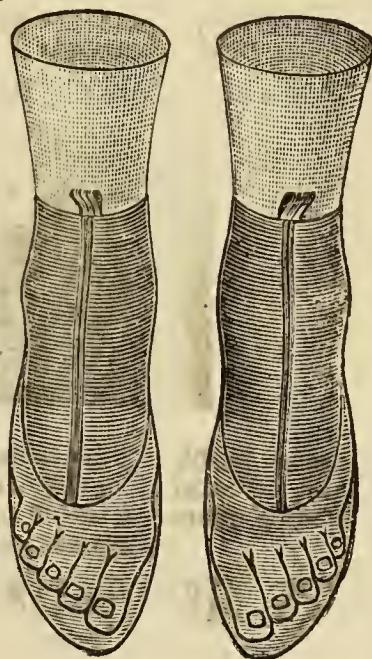


FIG. 2.

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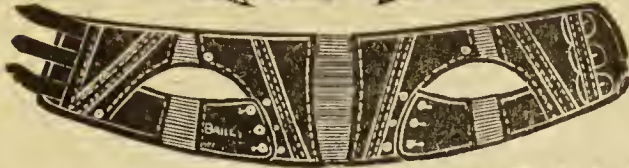
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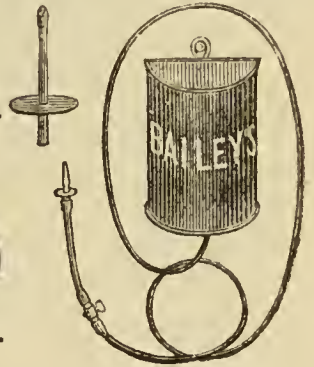
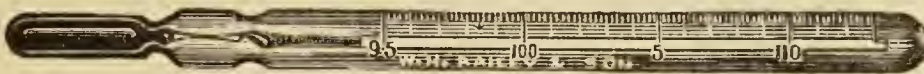
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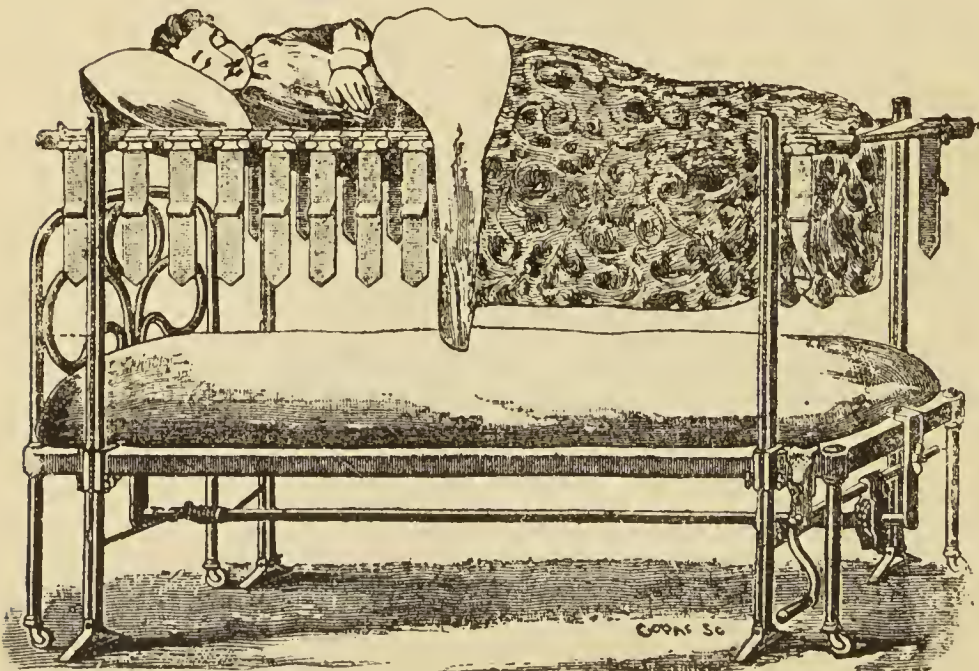
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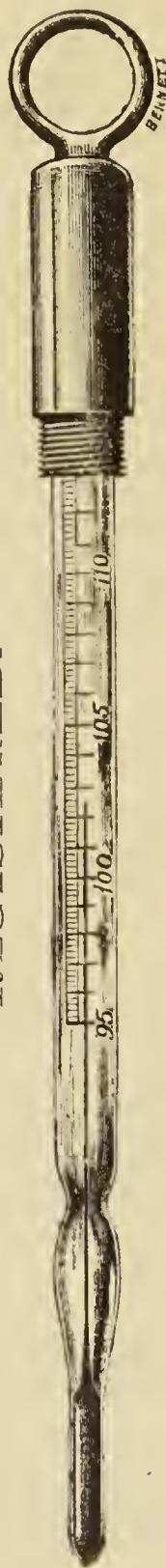
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